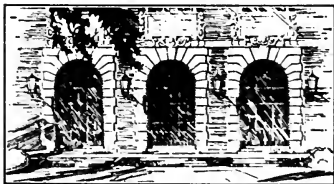




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HARGRAVE;

OR,

THE ADVENTURES

OF

A MAN OF FASHION.

BY

MRS. TROLLOPE,

AUTHORESS OF "THE WIDOW BARNABY," ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

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H A R G R A V E.

CHAPTER I.

THE gayest house in Paris during the winter of 1834-5 was that of Mr. Hargrave. It was a noble and elegant mansion in the Rue de Lille, the whole ground-floor and *premier* of which were occupied by his family, and contained apartments which might have accommodated two or three French families of fashion; but Mr. Hargrave was an Englishman of expensive habits, with a very decided taste for comforts and luxuries of all kinds.

The number of his family would not, indeed, have seemed to require such ample range, for it consisted of two young girls only; but it

was his pleasure that they should be lodged with greater magnificence than any other young ladies of private station in Paris.

With the undivided possession of the *rez-de-chaussée*, they had the undivided possession, also, of the noble garden, which, with its groves of forest-trees and wide expanse of lawn, spread behind it. Mr. Hargrave was a man of great taste, and of an inventive fancy, which wanted in the embellishment of every thing around him ; so that his dwelling was not only ample, well appointed, and magnificent, but graceful, fanciful, and picturesque in the extreme.

The two pretty creatures for whom all this elegance was provided shewed well in the midst of it ; and the critical eye of Mr. Hargrave, as he watched their graceful movements, reflected by polished mirrors, and illumined by a hundred wax-lights, often turned from their brilliant *entourage* to them, and from them to their brilliant *entourage*, in doubt as to which embellished the other most.

He was, in truth, exceedingly fond of both ;

although the entire sum of tenderness bestowed upon them was by no means equally divided; one only being his own child, and the other the daughter of his deceased wife by a former marriage. Hargrave's handsome fortune had been made in trade; his father having been a highly respected City banker. But though no degradation of any sort could attach to this, inasmuch as his own education was the same as that of the highest aristocracy, and the society of the worthy banker chosen always with a view to the advancement of his only hope and only heir, Charles Hargrave preferred Paris to London for the display of his wealth, because he fancied, not only that it went farther and distinguished him more, but also that its origin was less likely to be inquired into. In this, however, it is probable that he was mistaken; for, let folks think what they like, the ancient aristocracy of France is not worn out yet; and though it may be somewhat the fashion in the marketplace to seem to forget the difference between those whose shields won their bearings beneath

the *oriflamme* and those whose shields are innocent of any bearings at all, it may fairly be doubted if a *nouveau riche* ranks higher in France than in England.

Be this as it may, Charles Hargrave, having displayed himself for two seasons in Paris after the death of his father, contrived, either by means of his handsome person, or his agreeable address, or his large fortune, or by the power and force of all these combined, to fascinate and lead captive the pretty widow of M. le Vicomte de Cordillac, with an income of twenty thousand francs, and no incumbrance save a little daughter of two years old, who was to inherit the property after her.

This union gave birth to a second little girl, born exactly three years after the first; but, notwithstanding this difference of age, the children grew up with the strongest affection for each other: the mother seemed equally fond of both, and the pleasant-tempered Hargrave, although he certainly felt that Adèle de Cordillac was not his daughter, and that Sabina Hargrave was, ruled them both with so

silken a rein and such even-handed justice, that the family harmony was never disturbed by this variety of race.

Nor had his wife ever reason to regret that she had selected the rich and elegant stranger in preference to all the native adorers who addressed her. The marriage was, in fact, a very happy one. Mr. Hargrave continued to admire his wife to the end of her days; and, what was more important still, perhaps, to their conjugal felicity, every body else continued to admire her, too. Had it been otherwise, it is probable that not all the sweetness of temper, propriety of conduct, sparkling talent, nor even her unchanging affection for himself, would have sufficed to preserve unimpaired the sentiment which had first brought him to her feet, and which continued to render the union a happy one to its close.

Those who have not been led by some accident or other to study the effects of vanity in characters where it greatly predominates, have little comprehension of its strength. There is probably no passion, from the very

lowest to the most sublime, from the tenderest to the most brutal, which more deeply dyes with its influence the mind where it takes root. Greatly do those mistake who call it a "little" passion,—it is a great, an absorbing, a tremendous one. Its outward bearing, indeed, when the feeling is unskilfully permitted to catch the eye, may often seem trivial, and provoke more smiles than sighs; but its inward strength of influence is not to be judged thereby. As little do the graceful sinuosities of the constrictors' wavy movements give notice of the deadly gripe into which they can contract themselves, as do the bland devices which purvey to a vain man's appetite announce the insatiable voracity that is to be fed, or the unscrupulous means which may be resorted to in order to content it.

The death of his wife was a severe blow to Mr. Hargrave's happiness. She had been for years the bright and beautiful centre of that system, unequalled for its brilliance throughout Paris, of which he was himself the creator, and by which *his* wealth, *his* magnificence, *his*

taste, *his* hospitality, *his* graceful talents, and *his* great importance in the world of fashion, were made known to all the civilised world. It was a severe stroke ; and nothing less powerful than the passion which received and smarted under it could have enabled him to rally as he did, and start forth in his career anew.

But this enviable effect of a buoyant and elastic spirit could not by possibility shew itself openly during the first months of heavy mourning, in which, of course, the whole family were enveloped. Inwardly, however, it very soon had its effect ; and even while the crape-shrouded Adèle poured out his coffee on one side, and the pale Sabina, clad in sable weeds, tendered him the *Débats* on the other, before either of them had left the house, except to go to mass (for all the family were Roman Catholic), he began to contemplate, more critically than he had ever before done, the peculiar style of beauty of each, and to soothe his widower fancy by picturing to himself the effect they would produce when the time should come for recalling around him all the

eyes in Paris worthy to pass judgment, and all the voices capable of bestowing fame.

Little did they guess, poor girls! as they hovered mournfully near him, stilling their own deep grief, lest the sight of it should add to his, that the earnest gaze which was turned first to the one and then to the other fair face, was meditating what colours in the flowery chaplets which his fancy wove, would best set off the clear rich brown of Adèle's cheek, and which decorate with most effect the fair-haired delicacy of Sabina. They fancied, pretty creatures, that his kind heart was wrung by thinking of their motherless condition; and their pity for each other, and their pity for themselves, and their pity for him, were so increased thereby, that, spite of all they could do to prevent it, the tears burst forth anew, till the bright black eyes of the one, and the soft blue eyes of the other, were so miserably swollen and disfigured as to force the distressed widower to turn his thoughts inwards, where he found the only consolation he was capable of receiving, from remembering that tears

were invariably set aside at the same time that black dresses were taken off, and that six months would amply suffice for the use of both.

Fortunately for Mr. Hargrave, his charming wife was taken from him on the 15th of June; the Paris season therefore was over; and change of scene—that much-vaunted remedy for sorrow—might be administered to his daughters and himself, without losing much of that elixir of life which his soul best loved, and which was only to be found within the charmed circle of the French capital.

“We must leave this sad home of ours, dear girls!” said he, in a voice of profound emotion. “It is too—too sad for us all! There is no object we can look upon but brings a fresh pang with it! We will but wait for the arrival of your aunt, my dear children, before we set off for some new scene, which, from being unknown to us in the days of our happiness, will, I trust, be less painful to us than this.”

“Dear papa! Dear, dear papa!” said

both the weeping girls at once: and they hung about him in a manner so gentle, so caressing, and, as he remarked, so graceful also, that he permitted himself to be comforted by the anticipation of the effect his drawing-rooms would produce next season, when opened under the presiding grace of two such beautiful creatures.

Another point on which Mr. Hargrave was singularly fortunate was the facility with which circumstances enabled him to supply his young ladies with that most indispensable article—a chaperone; and not only did he achieve this with ease, but in a manner which, in his estimation, was absolutely perfect.

Madame de Hautrivage, the sister of his lamented wife, was, it is true, as unlike her in most respects as it was well possible for a sister to be; but, fortunately, this dissimilitude did not extend to birth, or station in society, or style of dress, and was therefore comparatively but of small importance. Both sisters were *née de Tremouille*, and both had married nobly, so that no reasonable objection could be

made to the arrangement which constituted Madame de Hautrivage a member of his family.

The only point of contrast, however, between the two sisters which caused Madame de Hautrivage any regret was, that on the death of her noble husband, instead of finding herself, as her elder sister had done before her, the mistress of twenty thousand francs a-year, she could not discover, after the most minute and careful investigation, that she could lay claim to a revenue of as many sous. The noble nephew of her noble husband had claimed, and taken possession of, all which his thriftless uncle had left; and how it was that Madame de Hautrivage contrived to retain her place in the first society without any visible diminution of the elegance of her toilet or her equipage, nobody appeared very clearly to understand.

Such, however, was the case; and she was therefore evidently the most eligible person Mr. Hargrave could possibly have chosen for the all-important office of chaperone to her two motherless nieces.

The choice of the retreat in which the next

six months were to be passed was regulated chiefly by distance ; Mr. Hargrave, in his then desolate condition, caring little for any thing save the power of finding himself sufficiently removed from all his friends and acquaintance, to permit his recovering his spirits and usual power of enjoyment without impropriety.

Adèle and Sabina rejoiced unfeignedly as they watched this admirable effect “ of change of scene ;” and not the less so, certainly, for its having brought them, for the first time in their lives, within reach of some of the wildest and most lovely country in the world. For the retreat chosen by Mr. Hargrave for the recovery of his spirits under the calamity which had befallen him, was Baden-Baden, at once the most attractive imaginable to the lovers of pleasure and the lovers of solitude,—to the votary of the gaming-table, and the worshipper of Nature,—to the *blasé* spirits who seek relief from the heavy vacuum of their own inanity, and to the happy, healthful being who can draw ecstasy from the bright torrent of the Mourg, and feel themselves in

Elysium when wandering among the dreamy solitudes of the five forests in its vicinity. Mr. Hargrave had heard much of Baden-Baden in both ways, and judiciously determined upon making choice of it, because it would enable each individual of his own dear world (the world of Paris fashion) to judge of his occupations there according to their various tempers. The men of pleasure might say, "Hargrave is right; at Baden-Baden one may learn to forget all things, even death itself;" and the sentimentalist would be sure to declare that no country in Europe could furnish haunts equally favourable to the indulgence of the sadness so dear to the bereaved heart as those purlieus of the Black Forest which may be found in its neighbourhood.

Thus all the mourners were as well pleased as mourners could be; for Madame de Hautrivage assured them all, separately and conjointly, that she had now but one single object in life, which was to see all and every one of them doing, saying, seeing, hearing, and feeling, exactly what they liked best.

CHAPTER II.

THOSE who know Baden-Baden will readily allow, that nowhere could the really mourning sisters have found so much to make them rejoice that they had left the scene of their still fresh sorrow behind them. “Papa is right, Sabina!” said Adèle, wonder-stricken and enchanted, as she stood upon the mouldering walls of the Alt Schloss, and looked out upon the distant Rhine. “How well must he know the nature of the human heart! I would not have believed, Sabina, that any thing could have so taken me out of myself, as it were, as do the glorious scenes of this enchanting region. Never, never can we either of us forget our mother! I would rather lay down beside her, in cold forgetfulness of all things

earthly, than not remember her. But here something seems to mix itself with the thought of her, that takes away the bitterness, and only leaves a feeling of soft and mellowed melancholy that I would not be without."

Sabina answered only by pressing the arm she held ; with a spirit less capable of kindling at the touch of every happy emotion, the younger girl had, perhaps, greater depth of feeling, or, at any rate, greater pertinacity of sorrow ; for it required longer to bring her to the consciousness of all the blessings which Nature had still in store for her. But by degrees she too acknowledged that it was a great comfort to be so far from "dismal Paris;" and that no one, she was sure, but her own dear, dear papa, would ever have thought upon a scheme so admirably calculated to heal their aching hearts.

There was one point, however, upon which this dear papa could never persuade either sister to agree with him ; and this was upon the great advantages to be derived, for their health and spirits, from attendance morning

and evening at the public rooms. On this point the two girls felt perfectly alike, and though most lively and affectionately grateful for the tender anxiety which prompted the proposal, they steadily adhered to their first assurance,—that they could not appear in public while they wore mourning, and that they would not shorten the usual period for wearing it by a single day.

To do Mr. Hargrave justice, he never, either in his own family or any where else, attempted to obtain concessions by his authority which were refused to his gentle, and, in most cases, irresistible entreaties. So Adèle and Sabina were permitted to have their own way in this ; and moreover, with the same indulgence which he had ever shewn to the wishes of both, he permitted them also, with the attendance of a certain venerable Roger Humphries, the only English servant in his establishment, to pass most of their mornings in driving about the singularly wild and beautiful country which surrounded them.

This unlimited furlough for wandering,

though it extended pretty nearly *ad libitum* as to the hours of daylight, must not be censured as an indiscretion on the part of Mr. Hargrave; for old Roger was no ordinary domestic, and, by way of a protector upon all such excursions as the sisters indulged in, was well worth a dozen chaperons. As it is likely enough that this rather singular serving-man may repeatedly appear in the course of the narrative, it may be as well to explain the origin of his position in Mr. Hargrave's family.

Roger Humphries, who when thus appointed to the post of *chevalier ambulant* through the Black Forest had well-nigh completed three-score years, occupied in the days of his youth a far different situation under the patronage of Mr. Hargrave's father. How those persons are designated who, being neither principal nor clerk, are constantly visible in a banking establishment, I know not; but Roger Humphries was one of these. If a door was to be opened or shut, Roger Humphries was at hand to do it; and if a letter or packet of importance was to be sent, it was to Roger Humphries that the

charge was given. He was a huge man, with a small head, and having large features in a face almost too narrow to hold them. His forehead was high, but had nothing of that ample extent which is supposed to indicate organic accommodation for deep thinking ; those, however, who were skilled in reading from external evidence what impulses are active within us and what are not, declared that there was in the character of Roger Humphries an adhesiveness of attachment, which would lead him to do much rather than abandon what he loved.

Some good or attaching qualities he must have had to induce the elegant Hargrave, whose household was *monté* with an attention to general effect which would have done credit to the grouping master (if there be such a personage) of the Grand Opera, — some attaching qualities Roger Humphries must have had to make Mr. Hargrave not only retain him in his service, but also to permit his personal attendance upon himself and his beautiful daughters ; and that, too, positively without any reference

whatever to the effect which the contrast of the old man's appearance, when seen in juxtaposition with either himself or them, might produce.

In truth, Hargrave knew that old Roger almost worshipped him,—he knew that not all the kingdoms of the world, nor the glory of them, would have tempted the old man to leave him, as long as he might be permitted to remain near enough to admire, to love, and to serve him.

It was with this venerable attendant, then, seated beside the coachman in the dicky of their elegant open carriage, that Adèle de Cordillac and Sabina Hargrave penetrated into every approachable recess within ten or twelve English miles of Baden-Baden. Nor were such recesses only deemed approachable to themselves as the carriage could draw near; for the greatest delight of all, to the two girls escaped for the first time from the tameness of French scenery, was to stroll on foot, followed by the faithful Roger (who took the liberty of carrying a stout staff the while), wherever a

bolder promontory or a blacker mass of shade than usual seduced their imaginations into believing that something "new and strange" might be found there.

In this way they probably became more intimately acquainted with all the intricate varieties of this singular locality, than even the Guide-writers themselves; for whereas these persevering and most useful purveyors for all wonder-seeking travellers go only where they think they can in common honesty invite others to follow them, our scramble-loving nymphs delighted especially in getting exactly where they thought that nobody else could get; and often had they to employ all their eloquence in order to persuade Roger, that clamberings and climbings totally impossible for him were both safe and delightful for them. At first the old man demurred a little; but repeated experience at length giving him confidence, both in their steadiness of eye and activity of limb, he ceased his remonstrances, and usually sat down with implicit obedience on the spot which the young ladies selected for

his repose, awaiting their return with the imperturbable patience of a faithful dog.

Had any one inquired, either of Adèle or Sabina, if they had encountered any adventures during these exploring excursions, they would assuredly have answered, "Yes, a great many." For if one of them found out a cavern of a dozen feet square in a rock, it was an adventure; or if the other came upon a holy virgin or a martyred saint enshrined between four narrow stone walls, with an opening of a foot square to peep out upon their worshippers, it was an adventure; besides a hundred other childish fancies, too silly to mention, all of which served to give interest to their rambles, and to figure in their journals. But excepting such as these, they could not have been said to meet with any; unless, indeed, a sort of mystical puzzle, produced by the atmosphere at one particular spot which they visited, may be so termed.

The mountain-road between Baden-Baden and Gernsbach runs over a ridge connecting, as it were, many separate heights together,

each one of which has between it and its neighbour, on both sides, a deep, wild hollow ; some wider, some narrower, some perforated with rocks of a thousand fantastic forms, and others covered with fern, or lined with the dark pine of the region, turning the light of noonday into the blackness of night.

It happened one morning that the sisters, having in view some object rather more distant than usual, had coaxed old Roger to eat his breakfast before the lark had finished hers ; and the coachman, faithful both for himself and his horses, being punctually at the door by six o'clock A.M., they set off, on rather a foggy and uncertain morning, with the intention of driving along this lovely Burgstrosse, descending to Gernsbach, and then following the course of the Mourg to Eberstein, the celebrated hunting-seat of the Duke of Baden.

To complete this project without a breakfast *en route* was impossible ; but they had ascertained that at the foot of the pine-clad mountain on which Eberstein is situated, there was a commodious and right pleasant *gasthaus* at

which this needful rest and refreshment for themselves and their horses could be obtained.

A short consultation was held with the servants at the door of the hôtel, before they set out, as to the chances for a fine day, or the reverse; and the majority of opinions being in favour of the expedition, the well-pleased girls stepped into the carriage and drove off.

Though the question had been promptly decided to their wishes by those they had consulted, they felt quite aware that the powers of the air were still in doubt about it; for, as they slowly mounted the steep ascent that leads by this mountain route from Baden, they perceived that they were getting at every step into a denser fog, and began to fear that not only had they a good chance of getting wet to the skin, but also that, if they escaped this disaster, they were pretty sure of escaping all knowledge of the objects they had hoped to look upon; for did the same kind of atmosphere through which they were then passing continue to envelope them, it was perfectly certain that they would be unable to see the

splendid landscapes of which, on that morning, they were especially in search.

By degrees, however, the aspect of things improved upon them ; and by the time they had reached that bit of terrace-like road which, having gradually descended for some distance from the highest level of the ridge, runs along the hill's side for the distance of half a mile, they perceived that beautiful effect of mountain vapour, which takes place when the sun steps forth to skirmish with it. Here and there the landscape peeped through with all the glow of summer brightness ; while at other points the white mist still hung like a heavy veil upon it, altogether concealing some objects, and shewing others under such delusive forms, as to leave the whole picture shadowy and uncertain. The two girls strained their eyes to ascertain what was water and what was land, and where the heavens ceased and the earth began : but the more they looked at it, the less they comprehended what they saw ; and both declaring, almost in the same breath, that the scene was somehow or other a thousand

times more beautiful than if it had been fully revealed in the broad light of unmitigated sunshine, they agreed, according to their usual custom when any thing struck them as peculiarly beautiful, to stop the carriage, and indulge in gazing about them with all the freedom of pedestrians.

Adèle ordered the coachman to drive slowly on, and wait for them on the summit of the next hill; and then, accompanied by Roger and his staff, they made their way to a small rocky promontory, which, jutting out from the hill's side, gave, in clear weather, a magnificent bird's-eye view of the valley at its foot. Now, the weather, to say the truth, was still any thing but clear, nevertheless, the scene they looked upon was most strangely beautiful, and they bounded forward to the extremest verge of the rock, in hope of seeing more of it. Here, on this extremest verge, they found a youth seated, with his legs over the precipice, his arms folded across his breast, and his eyes intently fixed upon a particular point of the scene below.

The young man turned his head as they approached, and, by a sudden and active movement recovering his feet, stood before them, cap in hand and bowing low ; but he did not seem inclined to retreat, though there was hardly space enough for the four to stand upon the little platform without danger. The view from this point was, indeed, singularly advantageous for shewing the half-hidden scene below. The pines, whose tops were some of them level with the rock, made a foreground as they gradually sloped down from it, dark as the Venetian tints of Titian, when he throws a mass of foliage across his landscapes to set off their silvery light. In the horizon were distant hills, looming high, and with various objects on and near them, considerably more distinct than usual. But all between looked like an inland ocean studded with islands, and at intervals a group of trees, a village spire, or the lofty gable of a farm-house, starting forth clearly to view, with a sort of incongruous brightness that seemed like the effect of magic.

“Does it not look like a glorious archipelago?” said Adèle in French; “and might not one almost swear, against all the geography books in the world, that yonder misty expanse was a noble lake?”

“It is no *noble* lake which lies before you, ladies,” said the young stranger in German; “but, nevertheless, there is a lake there, and one, too, of peculiar interest. Just in the midst of that blue mysterious vapour, which seems to have neither definite form nor definite limit, is the well-known Mummelsee, or Fairy Lake, of which so many wondrous tales are told.”

Adèle understood German tolerably well, but spoke it scarcely at all; but to Sabina, who loved its romantic literature and wild legendary lore better than all the other learning of the earth, it was as familiar as either French or English, and she immediately replied, without giving much time to meditation upon the propriety of thus entering into conversation with a stranger, by saying in the same language,—

“Are these wondrous tales connected with facts, sir, or are they merely fairy legends?”

“It is not easy,” returned the young man, smiling, “to answer your questions, young lady, as briefly as you have stated them, for I could scarcely reply by a simple yes or no to either. That there *are* strange facts connected with that Fairy Lake, none can deny; neither would it be consistent with truth to aver that the excited imaginations of those who watch its capricious influence do not exaggerate in their accounts of it. There is a mixture of truth in both these propositions.”

“Strange facts!” repeated Sabina, whose imagination was decidedly of the excitable class alluded to by the stranger. “What strange facts, sir?”

“There is at this moment beneath your eyes, and almost close to the foot of this rock,” returned the young man gravely, “or, at least, it is generally believed so, an extensive castle, partly in ruins, but in part still capable of giving shelter to man—were there any spirits bold enough to inhabit it—yet you per-

ceive no trace of it. Return to this spot again a few hours hence, and it is possible, nay, I believe probable, that exactly where you now see that silvery mass of floating mist, you will behold a seemingly substantial edifice of stone and mortar.”*

Adèle smiled, while Sabina almost trembled, not from fear indeed, but pleasure. And the elder sister, then slightly bowing to the unknown chronicler of the fairies, made a movement which indicated her wish of returning to the carriage; but Sabina appeared to have taken root upon the rock where she stood, and with her eyes intently fixed on the misty world below her, seemed totally to have forgotten all things save the mystical statement to which she had been listening.

* The locality of this delusive obscurity is selected purposely where no castle stands that the facts of the narrative may not be sifted too closely, and declared to be *personal*; an interpretation which has so often attended the writings of the author as to render caution necessary. Such delusions, however, do exist, not only in Germany, but in England. Dover Castle is sometimes perfectly invisible from the heights to the west of the town; from whence, at other times, it is seen in its fullest glory.

But Adèle was twenty-one years old and five months, whereas Sabina was only eighteen and four months; therefore it followed that the more prosaic sister generally regulated on all important occasions the movements of the more poetic one; and feeling a gentle pressure on her arm which sufficed to recall her to things present, Sabina, too, gave a farewell look into the mysterious valley, and with a blush, a vast deal more roseate than any displayed by Aurora that morning, made a bow to the stranger, a good deal less slight, and a great deal more respectful, than that of her elder sister, and yielded herself to follow the way she led.

“Is not this extraordinary, Adèle?” she exclaimed, as soon as they were seated in the carriage, and while she still looked back to the spot they had quitted; where the young man, now as invisible to her as the wondrous castle of which he told, stood shyly ensconced behind a crag, that he might gaze without offence as the brightest vision his waking eyes had ever looked upon passed away.

“ I suspect that the young gentleman was only quizzing us,” replied Adèle.

“ How *can* you think so ?” returned Sabina, in a tone that almost betokened indignation : “ I never in my life saw any one whom I thought less likely to be impertinent.”

“ I did not mean to accuse him of impertinence, Sabina,” replied her sister, laughing ; “ but you know travellers are always crammed with wonders whenever they think fit to listen with confiding ears to native historians.”

“ Native historians ! I do not know what you mean, Adèle, by native historians : but I will venture to say, without knowing whether that young man be native or not, that every syllable he uttered was most strictly true.”

“ And that this Mummelsee is really and in good sooth the haunt of fairies, who build and pull down castles *à volonté* !”

“ He never said any such thing, Adèle,” returned Sabina, gravely.

“ Did he not ? Well ! never mind what he said,” rejoined her sister, laughing ; “ but just use all your faculties to look at that glorious

gleam of sunshine that has burst out over those distant hills. We shall have a fine day yet, Sabina!"

"Indeed, I think so; and I shall enjoy it, oh! so much—so very much—Adèle, if you would make me one promise."

"What is that, dear?" returned Mademoiselle de Cordillac, playfully kissing her. "I am ready to promise any thing! That sunbeam has put me most superlatively in good-humour, for half-an-hour ago I was in despair about the day."

"Will you promise that, after seeing Eberstein, you will let us come back by this same road, instead of going round by the valley, as we settled to do yesterday?"

"In the hope of seeing those fine large eyes and that curly brown hair again, Sabina?"

"How can you talk such nonsense, Adèle! This *coup de soleil* seems to have affected your head very strangely. . . God grant that it may not have made you a fool for life! . . . What I do hope to see is the castle, and not the curls. Will you promise to come home this way?"

“I am by no means sure,” replied Adèle, maliciously, “that I shall not be giving a proof of the folly you deprecate if I say yes. However, I will not abuse the power given either by my age or my wisdom, and by this way we will return, sister mine. But, for goodness sake, do not give all your attention to castles which are in the clouds, instead of looking at the humbler glories of the earth. Was there ever any thing more beautiful than that landscape before us, waking into new life, as it does, from the magic touch of a sun-beam? . . . Trust me, Sabina, Nature is your only magician. I would not give one of the fleeting shadows produced by those retiring clouds for a whole host of fairies. . . . Is it not beautiful?”

* * * * *

Having obtained the desired promise, the young Sabina seemed wisely determined to bring herself back again to the objects before her, and, wherever her thoughts might be wandering, she looked at, and spoke of, all that Adèle pointed out. Their breakfast at

the foot of Eberstein, at the little inn beside the Mourg, was joyous; and their walk up the long ascent which led them to the castle, in all ways so agreeable, that they forgot they were not upon level ground. They turned aside, with all befitting reverence, to look at the shrine of the Virgin within the little Reingel chapel, and listened to the legend which recounted how the queer little figure, to which so many holy pilgrims still bow, got into it; and, lastly, they stepped out with ecstasy unbounded and inexpressible upon the marvellous terrace that surrounds this most beautiful of all Baden's glorious ducal residences.

In short, the long morning was spent in great enjoyment by both the sisters; but when the time came for turning their horses' heads homewards, it was evident that the elder had yielded herself more wholly to the visible beauties it had given to their view than the younger, for Adèle had forgotten all about the castle in the clouds, and told Roger, as she stepped into the carriage, that they were to follow the course of the river on their road home,

and be very careful not to keep papa's dinner waiting. But not so Sabina. Whether the exquisite beauty of Eberstein had put the magical edifice out of her thoughts during the time she was actually looking at it may be doubtful, but most certain is it that the moment she heard this command of her sister's, she exclaimed with very great earnestness upon the sin of broken faith, and declared that she should be more disappointed than she had words to tell if they did not return by the same road they came.

"Mercy on me!" cried the well-nigh weary Adèle, starting forward from the snug corner into which she had thrown herself. "I had totally forgotten all about it, Sabina. But I would not have you disappointed for the world. Tell the coachman to return by the road we came, Roger, and to stop exactly at the same spot where we got out this morning. But do you really think, Sabina, that you shall have strength enough to get out again?" she added. "In general I can stand fatigue better than you do; but now, I confess, I am

fairly beat; and I hardly think I would get out of the carriage again to see St. Peter's. . . . Do you really think you shall get out?"

"Yes, Adèle, I think I shall," replied Sabina, quietly; and no more was said on the subject till the carriage stopped, and Roger appeared at the door to announce that they had reached the place where they had quitted it in the morning.

"Yes! This is it!" cried Sabina, eagerly preparing to spring out.

"You are not really going to leave the carriage, Sabina, are you?" said the half-sleeping Adèle. "I am quite sure you will see nothing, for it is getting to be dark already. Look out from hence. You will see quite as much as from the rock, I'll answer for it."

But the younger sister was rebellious; and, promising to come back directly, ran forward faster than Roger could follow. With undeviating steps she reached precisely the same spot on which she had before stood; and look-

ing down into the valley perceived, with a degree of astonishment which made her heart beat, and her colour change, exactly such a castle as the stranger had described, apparently close to the foot of the rock on which she stood. She uttered an exclamation of wonder and delight, and stood for several minutes hanging over the beetling rock, contemplating with ever-increasing surprise the wide extent, the massive strength, and the near vicinity, of a fabric which a few hours before had been utterly invisible.

The first thrilling emotion which this sight inspired being over, she remembered the scoffing scepticism of Adèle, and turning to the old attendant, who had by this time overtaken her, desired he would go back with all the speed he could make to the carriage, and tell Mademoiselle de Cordillac that she must come to her directly.

Roger was not a man to dispute the commands of Mr. Hargrave's daughter; and, however little disposed for more walking, he immediately obeyed. But scarcely had he got

beyond her sight, than Sabina was startled by the apparition of the same tall figure, large eyes, curly hair, and all, which had greeted her on the self-same spot in the morning.

It is no paradox to say, that had she been less frightened, she would have been more shocked. To a young girl, brought up at a first-rate French seminary, with the strictest attention to Parisian etiquette, the idea of finding herself, by her own imprudence, alone with an extremely handsome young man, on an isolated pinnacle of rock, in, or near, the Black Forest, seven minutes after the sun had gone down, would have been quite enough at any other moment to have sent her flying off with more than Atalanta's speed of foot to join her sister. But now she was spell-bound: not, however, as it was possible that her saucy sister might have suggested, merely by some sudden sympathy with the young stranger himself,—her feelings were of a less mundane and ordinary kind. His sudden and unaccountable reappearance the moment she was alone, had something in it so strangely analo-

gous to the still more unaccountable reappearance of the castle, and to the mystic air of the changed landscape, according to his own exact prediction of it, that she actually trembled from head to foot with a genuine superstitious feeling.

I would here fain say something, if it were possible, to prove that my pretty Sabina was less silly than poetical; more abounding in imagination than deficient in judgment; and altogether, a great deal more to be admired than despised, for the emotion which made her fancy herself on the precincts of another world;—while, in fact, she was only contemplating the clear obscure of a delicious twilight in this. But I am perfectly aware that nothing I can just at present say on the subject would suffice to satisfy such carping critics as would make no allowance for a young lady, deeply versed in all the wild legends of Teutonic *diablerie*, and visiting the land which she had learned to consider as the favourite battlefield of fiends, and paradise of fairies, for the first time. It may, therefore, be wisest to let

the matter rest, trusting to the chance of her finding some sympathising friends, among those who are as young and fanciful as herself.

But the species of poetical trance into which Sabina thus fell did not last long. Propriety resumed her accustomed power, and thrusting blushing Imagination into the background, enabled her, when the young stranger exclaimed, "Said I not truth, lady?" to reply with a very respectable degree of nonchalance, "Ho, wohl, Meinherr," and with a slight bow and rapid step, to leave the young magician as he stood,—the gratified hope of her arrival, and the vexing disappointment of her departure, holding him transfixed between them.

Sabina reached the carriage very nearly as soon as the more deliberate Roger, and in time to prevent the reluctant compliance of the tired Adèle with the request she had sent by him.

"Oh! I am so glad you are come back, Sabina," she exclaimed. "Then you do not insist upon my getting out?"

"No, Adèle, no," replied the fluttered girl,

hastily resuming the place she had left beside her. "It was no use waiting till you came ; it is getting so late ; and, besides, I can tell you all about it."

"To be sure you can ; and I shall like it a prodigious deal better, I assure you. Did the curly locks say sooth ? Is there really a castle there ?"

"Yes," replied Sabina, in an accent of considerable solemnity. "Yes, Adèle, there is a castle there."

"You don't say so ! . . . Well, I am very glad of it ; and now I shall go to sleep again. I verily believe we must have walked a dozen miles to-day, for I never was so tired in my life ;" and so saying, Mademoiselle de Cordillac nestled again into her corner, closed her eyes, and positively did go fast asleep ; thereby rendering it quite impossible for Sabina to "tell her all about it" at that time. And it was long before the inclination to do so returned upon her. There is no class of feelings and ideas so completely dependent upon accident and locality as that which belongs to

poetical exaltation of all sorts. It was from no want of confidence in her sister, nor from any painful consciousness of feelings that she ought to hide, which for many months prevented Sabina's again alluding to the mysterious castle or to the youthful stranger whom she had seen in its vicinity ; for as the world, and the world's prosaic realities, again closed round her, she felt too strongly the childishness of the emotions they had inspired, to wish to talk about them.

This adventure, such as it was, and though, perhaps, hardly deserving of the name, was the only one which occurred to the fair sisters during their summer ramblings round Baden-Baden. In a different way, meanwhile, Mr. Hargrave and Madame de Hautrivage pursued their course, also, with considerable enjoyment, though but little variety. The library, the public rooms, and the ever gay and moving scene in the noble portico before them, sufficed, with their late rising, to fill up the day. And thus gradually wore away the months of summer and of sorrow. Not but that Mr. Har-

grave still very sincerely lamented the loss of his elegant wife,—and her two young daughters would either of them have given a right hand to have brought her back again,—but in exact proportion as their loss was hopeless and irreparable, did unrepining endurance follow it. Such is the benignant lot of nature!

As to Madame de Hautrivage, her philosophy required not the aid of any latent provision of Providence, in order to enable her to support her spirits. For the greater part of her life she had never omitted to repeat at proper intervals, “*J’adore ma sœur ! Tout le monde l’adore !*” And her part of the amiable Madame Hargrave’s funeral obsequies having been performed by her pronouncing these same sentences with no other alteration than changing the present tense into the preterite, she gave herself without scruple to the agreeable consciousness of having secured a home where she should be able to dress in a very superior style, and save money into the bargain.

CHAPTER III.

WE must now return to the opening of our story, from which a necessary digression has led us. The gayest house in Paris, during the winter of 1834-5, was that of Mr. Hargrave. There was not a single person of fashion, native or foreigner—inhabitant of the “*belle ville*,” or only a sojourner there—who did not share its hospitality and contribute to its splendour. Mr. Hargrave himself was ever the centre and main-spring of every elegant scene of amusement which went on there ; and much as it may be the fashion among the clever natives of that brilliant capital, while enjoying the costly entertainments of its British visitors, to pronounce them “*gauche et de mauvais ton*,” Mr. Hargrave seemed by common consent to

be declared an exception to the general rule. Every succeeding *fête*, let it be of what name or nature it might, was declared to be “*le plus parfaite qu’on avait jamais vu ;*” and even when no single Englishman was by to listen, it was quite a common thing for them to pronounce among themselves, that, “notwithstanding he was an Englishman, Monsieur Hargrave was a person *tout-à-fait comme il faut*, and actually graceful and agreeable, though not a Frenchman.”

Of this suffrage, this enviable preference, this intoxicating approbation, Mr. Hargrave was fully aware ; and not only did it constitute, in a great degree, the glory and happiness of his existence, but there is no exaggeration in saying that there was nothing which he would not have done rather than lose it.

It is not possible to suppose that scenes so splendid, amusements so skilfully chosen, and so ably varied, could fail of being agreeable to the two lovely girls, who seemed eternally to live in an atmosphere of golden light,

“ Giving and stealing *brightness.*”

Mademoiselle de Cordillac, in particular, did most certainly enjoy this portion of her existence very greatly. The natural pleasure which a pretty, elegant, and accomplished girl feels, from being duly appreciated, or, in plain English, greatly admired, and the joys of dancing and music, too, where youth, health, a light heart, and a good ear, assist to give them value, are worth something, when they come without drawback of any kind; and when to all this is added the carefully arranged absence of every annoyance, and the sedulously sought for presence of every thing agreeable to existence, it is no great wonder if a very lively and very innocent French girl did find herself superlatively happy in the midst of it. This measureless content of the bright-eyed Adèle was not, however, fully shared by her half-English sister. Sabina had a much less keen relish for the occupations which are resorted to for mere amusement, and was, moreover, apt to fancy that there was less of mental dignity in mirth than in melancholy. She was, too, less anxious to be popular, and derived infinitely

less gratification from admiration than Adèle, who knew no greater joy than to feel that every body around was gay and happy, and that some portion of their gaiety and happiness was derived from her. But this difference between them arose wholly from temperament, and in no degree from principle; both being equally pure in heart, and equally ready to have sacrificed any pleasure to what they believed to be their duty.

Many offers of marriage had been received by Mr. Hargrave for both the girls, but the answer was ever the same—"They are in no haste to marry; nor am I in haste that they should change their present state of unalloyed happiness for one more doubtful." This answer was, of course, without appeal; for though Mademoiselle de Cordillac's pecuniary independence of her step-father was perfectly well known, no Frenchman of sufficient rank in society to be received as a familiar guest by Hargrave, would have been hardy enough so completely to break through established usage as to request the young lady to judge for her-

self. And even if they had, there was little choice of their receiving any more favourable answer.

But though Frenchmen are not in the habit of requesting young ladies of fortune and fashion to receive their addresses entirely from inclination, and not from the influence of either custom or authority, there was a young Englishman at that time in Paris, who had been educated under a different code of manners, and who, having fallen gradually, but profoundly, in love with Adèle de Cordillac, thought of nothing but making himself acceptable to her, and to her only, without giving a thought to the possible influence of Mr. Hargrave. Alfred Coventry knew perfectly well that, if he could be happy enough to win the affection of Adèle, there was nothing in his fortune, connexions, or character, which would render it probable that her inclinations would be thwarted by her friends: and to this sweet occupation of winning his way to her heart he devoted himself, from the moment that he became thoroughly and conscientiously convinced

that he could be well content to make the study of her happiness the occupation of his future life.

It was long, however, before Adèle began to understand how very much he was in earnest. Accustomed from her first appearance in society to universal admiration, and equally accustomed to the belief that this had nothing whatever to do with her future settlement in life, she learned nothing from the marked attention of Mr. Coventry but that he was infinitely more agreeable than any other man of her acquaintance.

The incessant dissipation in which the Paris season was passed, and the rapid succession of engagements, which invariably included all the most distinguished members of its society, rendered the intercourse between these two people of almost daily recurrence; and they danced together so constantly, and talked together so much, that Madame de Hautrivage, who had early in the acquaintance made what she called proper inquiries in the proper places, began to flatter herself that her

beautiful niece was about to form a connexion in every way worthy of her. For some days after this conviction came upon her, Madame de Hautrivage waited with tolerable patience for the proposals, which she felt perfectly certain her brother-in-law would receive, and forthwith announce to her; but finding that nothing of the sort came, and that Mr. Hargrave seemed absolutely insensible to the necessity of bringing the business to a conclusion before the end of the season, it occurred to her that she was herself the most proper person to receive the overtures, which, perhaps, the shy young Englishman had hardly courage to make; and, accordingly, she took care at his next visit to have him shewn into an unoccupied *salon*, where she speedily joined him.

Though as far as possible from intending to make an offer of himself to the woman he adored through the medium of any one, Mr. Coventry was not insensible to the advantages which he derived from being very decidedly in the good graces of Madame de Hautrivage.

He had seen many a flattering admirer of his lovely Adèle sent *ça et là*, upon various frivolous excuses, on purpose, as he very correctly believed, to indulge him with the uninterrupted pleasure of her conversation. For this kindness he was by no means ungrateful, and devoted more time to the being civil to the good lady in return than any other woman, save his beloved, could boast of having won from him.

There is something very peculiar, and demanding a good deal of observation *de près* in order to comprehend it, in the tone taken occasionally in France by a pretender to a young lady's hand towards the mother or aunt of *la belle*. It sometimes happens, without, however, giving the slightest ground for scandal, that ladies so circumstanced, and being still *à prétension*, like to receive, and actually do receive, a very considerable number of sighs, hand-kissings, and tender glances from the identical men who are soliciting their interest with their direct or collateral descendants. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this

may fairly be understood to express nothing more than a latent regret on the part of the *prétendant*, that he had not flourished at the time when the lady before him might herself have been free to accept his honourable vows ; and though, by gentle degrees, this chastened gallantry merges in all well-regulated families into a tone more consonant to the relationship in which the parties subsequently stand to each other, its existence, while it lasts, is productive of a good deal of sentimental coquetry, which in some way or another is probably amusing to both parties.

Madame de Hautrivage was the last woman in the world to think of marrying a niece without coming in for her full share of this species of offering, and was most pleasantly persuaded that she actually did receive it every time Alfred Coventry offered her one arm, while Adèle hung upon the other, during a crowded exit from the opera, or *entrée* to the supper-room of a *fête*.

On entering the elegant little *salon* to which, by her orders, Mr. Coventry had been

shewn on the morning that she intended should witness the consummation of her hopes for her eldest niece's establishment, she found him engaged in examining a miniature, of which there were many, cased in velvet and gold, lying upon a table. It chanced that the portrait which at that moment occupied his attention was her own, and it was with a sort of tender smile that she remarked it.

"This is very beautiful," said Mr. Coventry, after paying his compliments to her as she entered. "I have seldom seen a lovelier face."

"Ah, flatterer!" she replied, shaking her head; "I greatly doubt your thinking so."

But for this bashful disclaiming of his compliment, which most assuredly was not intended for her, though it was for her picture, Coventry would never have guessed that the one was a "counterfeit presentment" of the other; for, although Madame de Hautrivage was still what is called "a fine woman," there was but little resemblance between her neatly wigged and carefully rouged face, and the

blooming little Hebe he held in his hand. But thus schooled, he of course took care not to betray his own dulness in tracing a resemblance, and gallantly replied that nobody could doubt the beauty of the face but herself.

She drew near him, and laid a finger on his shoulder.

“Come, come, my friend,” she said, with a slight sigh, “no more of this. It would be great folly to deny that those poor features, such as they are, have been gazed upon by the eye of love; but this is not a moment for you to think of it; your thoughts, *cher ami*, are, and ought to be, elsewhere. French women are proverbially called coquets—I know it! But trust me, Alfred, we are capable of checking the tenderness of nature, which leads to this, whenever more important business is to be attended to. Such is the case now; I think not that I am capable of doubting it. Speak then, Mr. Coventry, and be assured that it is not an indifferent ear which will listen to you. When Clementina de Hautrivage professes

friendship, it is no weak sentiment which fills her breast."

As Madame de Hautrivage concluded these words, she placed her right elbow on the palm of her left hand, and shielding her eyes behind the richly jewelled fingers thus supported, seemed to await his answer with that sort of forced composure which arises from high principle when struggling with sensibility.

Alfred Coventry understood her perfectly. He knew, as well as she did herself, that she desired he should propose for her niece, and that she was ready to bind him in chains of eternal gratitude by promising her influence in his favour. But rather than have conveyed his fond devotion to Adèle through such a medium, and have suffered the eyes which now languished at him between diamond fingers to catch from those of his beloved the first answer to his acknowledged hopes, instead of receiving that hoped-for answer into his own bosom, he would have endured any thing—he would have done any thing, even to making

downright love to the disagreeable personage before him.

In truth, he felt himself placed in so very awkward and critical a situation by this direct and unexpected appeal, that he saw he must make rather a desperate plunge to get out of it; and knowing that words of the most unmeaning gallantry are a sort of false coin which is permitted to pass current in France, without subjecting the utterer to any heavy pains and penalties, he replied, "My charming Madame de Hautrivage! can you believe it possible that in your presence the thoughts of any man can turn elsewhere?"

Under many other circumstances the exquisite Clementina de Hautrivage might have listened to this, and much more in the same strain, without perceiving in it any thing out of the common way, or calling for any return beyond the dropping of her eyelids, and, perhaps, a slight sigh. But the case was different now. In the first place, she knew, from considerable experience, that the most *volage* of

Englishmen are, generally speaking, infinitely more in earnest, for the time being at least, than the most *fidèle* of Frenchmen. Secondly, the unremitting assiduity of the young man before her could not be mistaken. If he was not in pursuit of Adèle de Cordillac, he must be in pursuit of some other of the family. The thing was clear, and admitted not the slightest doubt. Sabina Hargrave it could not be, for he had never distinguished her by any particular attention whatever. But with herself the case was far otherwise; he *had* distinguished her — “*Oh, Ciel!*” could she doubt it!

Her relationship with Madame Hargrave had given her some acquaintance with the English language, and at this critical moment she remembered an anecdote of George the Fourth, which had led to a phrase, now passed into a proverb, always pleasantly recalled by beauties of a certain age.

“*Faat, farre, and forté,*” she inwardly repeated, and, with all the quickness of thought, reasoned upon it. “*Faat — grosse? Je ne*

suis pas maigre *Farre*, blonde ou belle . . .
belle donc . . . et n'est-ce pas que je suis belle ?
. . . . *Forté* ça veut dire quarante et
bien j'ai quarante ans, je le sais
même quelques jours de plus mais qu'est-
ce que cela fait ? *Faat*, *farre*, and *forté* !
Alfred ! c'est moi ! c'est moi que tu
aimes ! Ah, Dieu ! Comment est-ce que
je l'ai jamais douté ? ”

During the moment thus employed by the lady, Mr. Coventry had recourse to the miniatures, and, as ill luck would have it, again opened that of the Madame Clementina. Had any doubt still remained on her mind, this act would have removed it. What *could* it mean at such a moment, but that in the extremity of his emotion, her lover found relief in gazing at her portrait rather than at herself?—a portrait indeed was, as she well knew, a sort of hieroglyphic in love, the mere perusal of which was an act of faith.

But, although Madame de Hautrivage was thus satisfactorily convinced of his passion, there were other things, besides its existence,

which it deeply behoved her to know, ere she decided upon her own line of conduct in return. Had the young man been a Frenchman, she would have been less perplexed—but as it was, she had doubts. Did the devoted, the noble-minded Alfred contemplate marriage? There was nothing cruel in the nature of Madame de Hautrivage, and had she felt certain that he did *not*, her education and her principles would probably have led her to pass a very lenient judgment on his indiscretion; but in her particular position it would be vastly more convenient that he should. She felt called upon, therefore, to act with becoming caution, lest any imprudent symptom of weakness on her part might lead him to change the better line of conduct for the worse. But, while fully impressed with the necessity for this sort of reserve, she at the same time felt it to be absolutely necessary that she should ascertain whether the attachment so openly avowed was of the graver or the lighter quality. From her knowledge of mankind in general, as well as from a latent

consciousness that she was not quite so young and so lovely as she had been, she might, perhaps, have been prematurely led to the conclusion that Mr. Coventry intended nothing more than one of those *liaisons par amours*, for which her happy country was so justly celebrated. But there was a gentle decorum of manner about him, which made her hope better things; and she very nearly convinced herself during the next five minutes' conversation with him, that his views were most strictly honourable, and that she had nothing whatever to fear from the vehemence of his passion, which could militate against the hope — every moment becoming stronger — that his purpose was to win her affections, with no other object than to make her his wife.

After remaining in very idle chit-chat as long as he thought there was any hope of seeing Adèle enter, Mr. Coventry's patience gave way, and suddenly rising, he said,—

“ My dearest Madame de Hautrivage, I must wish you good morning; and must trust to your goodness to excuse the unreasonable

length of the visit I have made. I am not, I confess, without hope that though I have not dared fully to open my heart to you, yet that you have guessed in some degree what is passing there, and that you do not altogether look upon it with displeasure."

"Thank God!" mentally exclaimed Madame de Hautrivage; "he has ventured to speak out at last!"

"Mr. Coventry," she replied, "I will not affect to misunderstand you; such dissimulation would be unworthy of us both; and I am persuaded that I could only lose in your estimation by resorting to it. I scorn to do so, Alfred Coventry,—I scorn the appearance of throwing difficulties in your way, when my own heart tells me that none exist. I have now said enough, I trust, to still the agitation of your spirits, and to make you feel all the delicious calm produced by hope unchilled by fear. One word more, and you shall leave me, Alfred. Be assured that the delicacy which has prevented your explaining yourself more fully is well appreciated by me; and

that, though a Frenchwoman, and accustomed, perhaps, to plainer speaking, I am not insensible to the charm of that reserve which seems ever, in your countrymen, to accompany the most perfect faith and the truest sincerity. May I not thus interpret it, dear Alfred?"

"You may, indeed," returned Mr. Coventry, with great earnestness, and not a little pleased at believing that he had succeeded in propitiating the aunt without forfeiting the dear English privilege of himself confessing his love to the woman who had inspired it. But knowing, as he did, what the manners and customs of "*la grande nation*" demanded on such occasions, he could not but feel a vast deal of gratitude to the kind-hearted woman who had thus permitted him to break through them all, without testifying the slightest displeasure at it. In truth, at that moment his heart was overflowing with a multitude of happy, gentle, and affectionate feelings; and not wishing to prolong the dialogue, lest he might be led on to say to another what he had determined to utter only to the ear of

Adèle, he relieved the overflowing fulness of his emotions by respectfully impressing a kiss on either cheek of his intended aunt.

Had he not left the room the moment after he had perpetrated this audacity, all the foregone conclusions of Madame de Hautrivage might have been overthrown; and all the satisfactory composure of spirit, derived from the conviction that the sanctity of his honourable attachment had put a bridle on its ardour, lost. As it was, however, no man ever left a lady more completely satisfied with his words and conduct. For many years she had been labouring, with an expenditure of Machiavelism sufficient to maintain the most crafty dynasty that ever ruled, to obtain a second marriage, which might supply the pecuniary difficulties of her first; and now, at the very moment when she had begun to confess to her heart of hearts that her chance of obtaining this was well-nigh gone for ever, behold her in possession of more than her most sanguine hopes had ever represented as possible!

It is, I fear, by no means improbable that

the state of things, as thus described, will be censured by my countrywomen as highly unnatural, not to say impossible. But to all such, I would recommend a deeper attention to the character of our fascinating neighbours than they have probably yet given. It must be remembered, in the first place, that though there are doubtless many among us who live, and, fortunately for the happiness of their earthly existence, die in the belief that they are a thousand times more charming than any one else ever thought them, nevertheless, not one of the whole number ever felt that delightful conviction which is common to all Frenchwomen—that if they are ugly, *c'est égal*; that if they are ignorant, *c'est égal*; also, that if their reputation has melted away, not into thin air, but into an atmosphere charged to explosion with

“ Little hints of heavy scandals,”

still *c'est égal*! For be they as ugly as Hecate, as old as her grandmother, and with a worse reputation, our fair neighbours have each and

all of them the immutable persuasion of possessing a charm, a *tournure*, a style, a tone,—a *something*, in short, that is perfectly and altogether irresistible. It is for this that they have invented for themselves a phrase which, in speaking of this extraordinary power of fascination, conveys in four words a description of it. What is the “*Je ne sais quoi*” so fondly boasted of among them, but this innate assurance of being bewitching without any possibility of stating the reason why? Most assuredly, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, this inexpressible, universal, irresistible attraction, of which no Frenchwoman scruples to *confess* herself conscious, if strictly inquired into, can only be fitly described by this simple and sincere reply, “*Je ne sais quoi*.” The phrase may, indeed, be safely declined through every possible voice, mood, and tense, and still be found to furnish an answer most strictly true,—

“*Je ne sais quoi*.”

“*Tu ne sais quoi*.”

“ *Il ne sait quoi.*”

And when brought to the climax, “ *Nous ne saurons jamais,*” it will not, even then, have exceeded its proper limits. Admirable phrase! Perfect alike in its *naïveté* and its truth! All the nations of the earth ought, in common justice, to exclaim in chorus, “We thank thee, France, for giving us that word!”

Till all this has been duly inquired into and understood, I must take leave to deprecate the sentence which shall declare the satisfaction of Madame de Hautrivage, after her interview with Mr. Coventry, to be unnatural. So far, indeed, is this from being the case, that had she even been forced to explain the charm in which she confided, with more specific exactness than the national formula above quoted supplies, she would have found herself at no loss for it,—for she would have proudly answered,—

“I am a Frenchwoman!” An answer, by the by, which none can duly appreciate who have not listened to it in the vernacular. The

tone with which "*Je suis Française*" is pronounced, being decidedly more pregnant of innate contentment and self-gratulation than any other in the world.

CHAPTER IV.

No sooner was Madame de Hautrivage convinced that Mr. Coventry had left the house, than she hastened to the room generally occupied by the young ladies in the morning; not, indeed, with any fixed intention of communicating to either of them the scene which had just taken place, but rather to enjoy the consciousness of her own delightful secret in the presence of those who might fancy, perhaps, that they had a better right to be the heroine of such a mystery than herself.

She found Sabina, as usual, deeply engaged upon a volume of wild German stories, which alternately with the poetry of the same imaginative land furnished one of the greatest charms of her existence. She was, indeed, too

completely occupied even to perceive the entrance of Madame de Hautrivage, and continued to read, without raising her eyes. But Adèle, though she had a book before her, was very far from bestowing upon it the same degree of attention; she even seemed glad of an excuse to close it, and when her aunt entered the room, threw it aside, and languidly addressed herself to her embroidery frame.

“Ah! you happy young creatures!” exclaimed Madame, standing for a moment to contemplate them. “How devoid of all care is the destiny of early youth! And how little does strong emotion of any kind interfere with your joyous existence!”

“Joyous!” repeated Sabina, looking up, and shaking her head with a sort of mournful smile. “I do not think, Madame, that you have chosen the epithet well when speaking of Adèle to-day; for I think I never saw her so little joyous in my life.”

“Ah! Is it so?” said Madame de Hautrivage, turning her eyes upon her niece, and immediately perceiving that she did indeed

look paler, and less gay than usual. "What is it, Adèle? Are you unwell, my child?"

"Shall I tell tales, Adèle?" said Sabina, laughing. "Shall I tell Madame that you certainly expected Mr. Coventry to call this morning, and are disappointed because he has not made his appearance?"

"You are a silly child to utter such nonsense," replied Adèle, gravely. "But, fortunately, I know that if you really thought any such thing, you would not say it."

"Upon my word, Adèle, you are mistaken," replied her sister. "I am perfectly in earnest in what I say; and the reason why I have no scruple in uttering it is, that I feel persuaded your aunt knows as well as I do, that Alfred Coventry is going to propose for you,—if he has not done it already."

A much more mischievous person than Sabina might have studied for a month before they could have spoken any thing so calculated to torture Madame de Hautrivage as these few words. From one short, sharp moment of painful thought, the intended bride felt un-

certain as to what line of conduct it would be most judicious to pursue. She looked at Adèle with a frowning and indignant brow, and a multitude of hateful surmises chased each other through her brain; but there was something so particularly innocent and unconscious of offence in the expression of the sweet girl's blushing face, as she bent her head over her work, that her aunt felt convinced that if Sabina were right, and that the thoughts of Adèle really did wander towards Alfred Coventry, it was not in consequence of any thing which had yet passed between them, but solely from an impulse of some unjustifiable girlish fancy, which it would have been her especial duty to check, even had she no other interest in the business than that of a maternally anxious and watchful friend.

“Come with me, Adèle, my love,” said she, in a voice of much kindness. “I wish to speak a few words to you in private.”

Adèle trembled from head to foot. She doubted not at all, more than the gentle Sabina, whose eyes were fixed upon her with a

look of the tenderest interest, that Madame de Hautrivage had been commissioned to break to her the proposals of the young Englishman. Pleasure will often shew itself under an aspect that looks like grief; and Adèle could not have looked paler, as she rose to obey the invitation of her aunt, had she been sure that she was about to listen to the announcement of the heaviest misfortune that could possibly fall upon her.

Having reached the *salon* which Coventry had just left, the lady who considered herself as his *fiancée* sat herself down exactly where he had sat, and made a signal to her niece that she should place herself opposite.

“Adèle!” she said, with much solemnity of manner, “I might, perhaps, as the eldest child of my deceased sister, have selected you as the person to whom I would first wish to communicate the important news I have to tell, even if the silly nonsense just uttered by your childish sister did not render it absolutely necessary. She spoke, my dear, of your having an idea,—that is, of your having taken it into

your head ; or rather, I think, of her having taken it into *her* head—that Mr. Coventry, our English friend, Mr. Alfred Coventry, had thoughts of making proposals for your hand in marriage. I trust, my dear, that Sabina Hargrave had no right whatever to say what she did, and that you will be ready to assure me that no such ridiculous idea has ever entered your imagination.”

Madame de Hautrivage here ceased to speak with her tongue ; but her eyes, steadily bent upon the face of her suffering niece, carried on the examination with the most inquisitorial severity, and left poor Adèle no resource but to turn away her face, and fix her own eyes upon the ground. Had the words of Madame de Hautrivage suggested to Mademoiselle de Cordillac the meaning they were intended to convey,—had she understood from them any reproach for having hoped in vain for the offered hand of the young Englishman, her manner would have been totally different ; for she would not have called in vain upon the pride and delicacy which were strong within

her, for power to rebut so offensive a suspicion. But these tremendous words, "the important news I have to tell," still rung in her ears, and she understood from them nothing less than a formal annunciation that *some* proposal had been made for her, which the wisdom of her aunt approved. True, Adèle was independent; she remembered this, and thanked Heaven for it. But the consciousness that her opposition to every proposal in the world but one would, in truth, arise from her having committed the offence so grievous in the eyes of France,—men, women, and children,—of daring before marriage to prefer one human being to all others, completely overwhelmed her, and gave her the appearance of guilt, which she was ashamed either to acknowledge or deny.

"What am I to think of this confusion,—this terrified embarrassment, Mademoiselle de Cordillac?" said her aunt, trembling with passion. "Is it possible that you have so completely, so eternally disgraced yourself, as to bestow your affections on a man who not only is totally free from all partiality to you, but

actually affianced to another? Must I, indeed, believe this possible in the child of my own sister?"

"Affianced to another!" repeated Adèle, unconscious that she spoke at all.

"Yes, mademoiselle, to another! Do you still doubt? Must I go yet farther to make you withdraw this most indecent acknowledgment of unrequited and unsought-for love? Nay, then, you shall be satisfied, young lady. You shall have no excuse for persevering in this fearful degradation from any ill-timed concealment of mine. Know then, Mademoiselle Adèle, that I have this very day, and in this very room, myself received a proposal of marriage from Alfred Coventry!"

"And for whom, aunt?" said Adèle, recovering her usual manner.

"For myself, Mademoiselle de Cordillac!" was the reply. "You look surprised, Adèle," resumed Madame de Hautrivage; "and, I am sorry to say, mortified. But you are old enough to know, my dear, that it is not only youth, and the earliest dawn of beauty, which

produces the sincerest attachments, and still less the most frequent offers of marriage. I have never thought it necessary, my dear, to explain to you, or to any one, the exact state of my affairs; but the fact is, I am extremely rich. It is probable that you may have guessed this from the style of my dress and general appearance, but I am aware that you could not in reality know much about it. Perhaps, even, I have in some degree wished to conceal the fact, from the dread of being eternally persecuted with proposals, and this may satisfactorily account for any thing you may have ever heard to the contrary. But the case is altogether different with Mr. Coventry. He has, as he most certainly had a right to do, carefully informed himself of the facts in this case; and I have lived too long in the world to think the worse of him, mademoiselle, for selecting a wife whose fortune may enable him to do many laudable acts which he might not be able to achieve without it. I have, indeed, reason to believe that it is his intention to obtain a seat in the British

Parliament,—a sign of very noble ambition, which I shall greatly approve, although I am aware of the heavy costs it brings with it. But, be this as it may, mademoiselle, *mon parti est pris*,—I have accepted the offered hand of Alfred Coventry, and his lips have ventured to ratify the contract, not only in words, but by a kiss of affection equally solemn and tender. After this,” added Madame de Hautrivage, with an air of impressive dignity, “I need hardly add that I consider myself already as his wife!”

The elderly beauty was perfectly right in conceiving that Adèle was surprised, but wrong when she added that she was mortified. It was not mortification that she felt. She was shocked, and she was astonished,—painfully astonished by the information thus communicated to her; but a stronger feeling still was thankfulness, that, notwithstanding the feelings and the hopes which she knew had found a place in her heart, nothing had ever passed between herself and Mr. Coventry which could have enlightened him on the subject. She recalled, by one rapid glance

over the past, a hundred instances of looks and expressions on his part that seemed to indicate his devotion to her; but not one—no, not the shadow of one, wherein he could have traced any feeling in return that she would have wished to conceal. It is true that of late she had been in daily expectation of learning from Mr. Hargrave, or her aunt, that he had declared in the usual form by which such matters were managed in France, the sentiments which she had fancied he wished her to perceive. But most happily for her present tranquillity, the manners of her country, and in which she had been most carefully educated, so guarded and fenced her in from all approaches not made in the usual way, that in the midst of daily intercourse and devoted attention she had still retained the love and manner of a young girl who had never dreamed of love. It was, indeed, this reserve, so constantly, and at all times and seasons preserved by Adèle, which had hitherto prevented Coventry from laying his heart at her feet. Like other young men of large inde-

pendent fortune and unobjectionable station and character, he had received his share of coaxing from careful mothers and provident fathers; and though still under thirty, had already learned to tremble at the danger of being married for his acres rather than for himself. When first he looked at Mademoiselle de Cordillac with the admiration which loveliness excites when the peculiar style of it particularly pleases the taste of the gazer, he rejoiced at perceiving that her position was so brilliant, her independence so generally recognised, and the admiration she excited so general, that *should* it so happen that his liking grew into love, he might be pretty sure of not winning her unless she loved him too.

It was this confidence, perhaps, which made his long-sought-for heart surrender itself so promptly to the beautiful French girl, despite a few English prejudices which, under other circumstances, might have led him to pause; but certain it is, that before he had been six weeks in the habit of daily and nightly conversing with Mademoiselle de Cordillac, he

became most deeply attached to her. Yet still he spoke not the important words which were to place all his hopes of earthly happiness in her hands; for still he doubted whether there could be any feeling capable of being fostered into love in one so very free from every recognised symptom of it. By degrees, indeed, he saw, or fancied he saw, a sparkling brightness in her eye when he approached that made his heart bound as he watched it; and he had pretty well made up his mind to wait for no surer indication of what was passing within, when this fatal interview with Madame de Hautrivage took place.

After listening with becoming gravity, and as much composure as her speaking features could assume, to Madame's history of the parting salute, Adèle rose, and said in a gentle and very tolerably steady voice, "I am obliged to you for this confidential communication, aunt, and beg you to believe that I sincerely wish you happy. For the emotion you witnessed when you said that you had important news to tell me, you will easily understand it

when I confess that I thought you meant to announce some application, with which you were favoured, for myself. I am too happy, aunt, as I have before often told both papa and yourself, to wish for any change and all I ask for is to be permitted to remain as I am."

"Well, my dear," continued Madame de Hautrivage, very complacently, "if that is all, I see no reason whatever for not indulging you You are a very handsome girl, Adèle, and, better still, you have a very handsome fortune, which will always suffice to secure you an eligible *partie*, whenever you shall happen to change your mind."

Mademoiselle de Cordillac made no reply to this agreeable prediction save a smile and a bow, and then quitted the room, leaving her aunt exceedingly well pleased at the interview.

"Well, Adèle," cried Sabina, as her sister re-entered their boudoir; "what is it all about? Is it an offer of marriage from Mr. Coventry that Madame has announced to you?"

“Yes, Sabina, it is,” replied Adèle, with a languid smile; “she has, indeed, announced to me an offer of marriage from Mr. Coventry. But it is not for the person you are foolish enough to suppose,—it is not for me, Sabina.”

“For whom then? Not for me, I am very sure.”

“No, my dear; it is for neither of us. It is to Madame de Hautrivage herself. Mr. Coventry is going to be married to my aunt.”

“Adèle! what can induce you to amuse yourself by talking such nonsense?”

“If there be nonsense in the business, Sabina, it is not mine. I have repeated to you very exactly, the information I have just received from Madame de Hautrivage. She tells me that she is affianced to Mr. Coventry, and that she already considers herself as his wife.”

“And it is without laughing that you say this, Adèle?” said her young sister, looking at her grave face with the most unfeigned astonishment. “I wish to Heaven you would explain yourself! I cannot bear to be mystified

about any thing serious, and particularly about any thing which concerns you."

"Believe me, Sabina, there is no joke in the matter; and you should be glad, dearest, that if I do not laugh, I do not weep either. I am shocked to think that, partly by your flattery, and partly by my own, I had very nearly persuaded myself to believe that this gentleman had treated me with particular attention; and, what is worse still, that I was exceedingly well pleased that so it should be. Had I in any other way been thus suddenly obliged to give up all the thoughts and . . . why should I deny it to you, my Sabina? . . . all the *hopes* which have sprung from this wild idea, the pain—the disappointment would have been hard to bear. But now, Sabina, what is there in it more terrible than awaking from a dream? There is no such man as the Alfred Coventry by whom I fancied myself beloved; and though my vision was a very pretty vision, and that all it wanted to be perfect was that it should be

true, I am not weak enough to sit down and break my heart that it is not so."

"God forbid you should, dearest Adèle!" exclaimed Sabina, who, now that the truth was forced upon her, looked, if possible, paler than Adèle herself,—“God forbid that you should ever waste another thought upon one so utterly contemptible! And yet, merciful Heaven! how is it possible to believe it? Madame de Hautrivage on one side, and Adèle de Cordillac on the other, and a man is found who prefers the former to the latter! Oh! it is monstrous, Adèle. And though I no longer suspect you of meaning to deceive me, I cannot help believing still that our poor aunt deceives herself; for, without any great degree of self-love, you must surely be aware that such a preference is absolutely unnatural.”

“Perhaps it would be so,” replied Adèle, with another of her altered smiles, “were it not for the motive which Madame de Hautrivage herself, with a total absence of vanity or self-delusion of any kind, explained to me.

The confession was certainly too *naïve* to leave any doubt of its veracity. She told me, Sabina, what we neither of us ever knew before—and no wonder, for I am sure we never bestowed a thought upon the subject,—she told me that she was very rich, and that Mr. Coventry had many objects of laudable ambition before him, which his union with her would enable him to achieve. So, at least, we must allow that, however much my own vanity has led me to deceive myself, Mr. Coventry has evidently not attempted to deceive her.”

“A very noble degree of sincerity, indeed,” replied Sabina, “and well worthy of the parties between whom it has been displayed! Now then, Adèle, let us never mention this hateful man’s name again. He has put himself up to sale, and, as I presume, the highest bidder has got him. Were I you, I would most cautiously avoid all intercourse with him. If he really be paying his addresses to this good lady — if he is really to become your uncle, it may, and must be, I suppose, impossible to keep wholly out of his way ; but,

were I you, I never would permit him to converse with me again."

"And so display to him the profound impression which his light gallantry has made upon my too sensitive heart? No, Sabina, if you were me, you would do no such thing. Let me tell you honestly, my sister, how it stands with me:—There are some painful feelings that I could bear, and, as I hope, bear well; but there are others which I could not bear at all—or, at any rate, very ill indeed. I believe I could bear well the mortification and disappointment consequent upon finding that a gentleman whom I had first endowed with all the virtues under heaven, and then laid at my feet as my lover, was about as far removed from deserving the first as the last of these imputations. Yes, Sabina, I could bear this, and feel, perhaps, in the course of time, that it was a very useful lesson against presumption of all kinds. But what I could *not* bear, is the thought that Alfred Coventry should read the disappointment of my silly heart in my countenance or in my manner to

him. God forgive me, Sabina, but I think that, rather than bear this, I would die! Then save me from it, dearest — dearest love, as you pity me!”

Inexpressibly affected by the manner in which poor Adèle uttered these words, so totally unlike any thing she had ever heard from her before, Sabina knelt on the footstool before her, and, throwing her arms round her, exclaimed, “Oh, Adèle! Tell me only what you wish me to do or to say that may comfort you, and it shall be the first object of my life to obey you.”

Adèle returned her caresses, and a few tears escaped from the bright eyes of both; but in the next moment the smile with which the elder sister reproved the weakness of the younger shewed that it was not in the *larmoyant* strain that she intended to seek for consolation.

“I will tell you,” she said, “what it is I wish you to do; and all I wish you to say, my own gentle, sweet Sabina, is, that you will endeavour to support me in the line of conduct

which I intend to pursue. What you must do, love, will not be very difficult; for it is only to treat Mr. Coventry, and our aunt too, exactly in the same manner as you have ever done. Can you do this for me, Sabina, even if it should sometimes cost you a slight struggle with your inclinations?"

"A slight struggle!" Sabina repeated with a sigh. "*Mais c'est égal.* I question whether I have the power of being a very skilful actress under any circumstances, but I will do my best to please you, Adèle."

"Thank you, dearest! I ask no more. All the skill needed is merely to avoid all occasions of testifying coldness or dislike. And now, Sabina, we will talk as little about this unpleasant blunder of mine as may be, and do not fancy that I am going to pine in thought. I do assure you, sister mine, there are many points on which I ought to be most especially grateful, and I trust I am so. First, for instance, I know that I have never betrayed myself; and secondly, I know also that this timely drawing aside the glittering veil with

which my false prophet was invested will very effectually prevent the peace of my future life from being injured."

Sabina Hargrave had the very highest possible opinion of her sister's judgment and high principle, as well as an attachment for her, as firm and devoted as it was possible for one human being to feel for another; it was, therefore, with the most docile obedience that she complied with these injunctions: but it was not without difficulty, for her feelings towards Mr. Coventry had more of bitter dislike in them than any injury offered to herself could possibly have produced; and as for Madame de Hautrivage, there was a mixture of scorn, pity, and disgust, in the sentiment she excited, which made it a pretty severe penalty to converse with her, and no slight one to treat her with the respect which her near relationship demanded.

CHAPTER V.

ALFRED COVENTRY, meanwhile, passed out from his interview with Madame de Hautrivage in the happiest state of mind imaginable. He had been quite aware of the sort of expectation to which it was probable his attentions to Adèle had given rise, and was inexpressibly relieved by the subject having been satisfactorily discussed without his having been driven to send in, *en règle*, a statement of his wishes and pretensions, of his hopes and his rent-roll.

“It will not, then, be from the elegant *nonchalant* father-in-law, or from the made-up *maniérée* aunt, that I shall learn whether Adèle de Cordillac is to be mine or not!” thought he. “It will be from the matchless eyes of

the bright angel herself that I shall learn my destiny, and may God give me strength to bear it like a man; for either way the sentence will be enough to overpower one. Should it be, ‘*No, sir, no! I can never be yours!*’ which way shall I turn? Whither shall I go? How shall I be able to look at her and live, if she tells me this? And — merciful Heaven! — should she say to me — or should she look as if she meant to say to me — ‘Alfred, I am thine!’ what will become of me then?”

But wayward as these fancies seemed to be, hope so joyously predominated, that though he really endeavoured to examine his chance as doubtingly and modestly as possible, his step was light, and his gay eye as bright as the sunshine it encountered, as he walked across the splendid bridge which leads from the Chamber of Deputies to la Place de la Concorde.

Too much occupied by his own busy thoughts to know particularly well which way he was going, Coventry was passing the gates leading to the Tuileries Gardens, when he was

accosted by a young Russian nobleman of considerable talent and great acquirement, with whom he had formed an acquaintance of more intimacy, perhaps, than with any other foreigner whom he had encountered during his residence abroad.

“*Mon cher !* You look as if you were setting out on a ramble from earth to heaven !” said Count Romanhoff, suddenly stopping him by laying his hand on each of his shoulders ; “and yet you turn your back on the Elysian Fields, which shews you to be greatly ignorant of the way. But truly, for the present, I would rather you should miss than find it, for the sight of your countenance is refreshing. You are the only man I have seen to-day who does not look as if he must step with caution, lest he should stumble as he walked and get his brains knocked out in some unaccountable manner or other before he knew who was near him.”

“What mean you, Romanhoff?” returned Coventry, laughing. “Why should I expect to have my brains knocked out?”

“Only because it is so very much *la mode* ! But, upon my honour, I begin to doubt if you even know of the adventure which has made all the men of fashion in Paris turn pale ?”

“Nay, you may do more than doubt,—you may be very sure of it. I know no more what you are talking about than if I were returning from the journey you were pleased to mention, and this moment descended from the moon.”

“Then you have not heard that last night, for the third time within the last month, a gentleman leaving Riccordero’s *salon de jeu*, with a considerable sum of money won there, was robbed, and left bound hand and foot in a corner so remote as to have been discovered only this morning ?”

“No, truly, have I not. Three times within a month ! And coming from the same place, too ! This does not speak much in favour of the Parisian police, methinks.”

“Oh ! for that, it is quite an exceptional case ; and it would be hardly fair to blame the police for not interfering to prevent what it

would have been so perfectly impossible to foresee," replied the Russian.

"I don't suppose that any robberies are absolutely foreseen, Romanhoff; for in that case, of course, none would be perpetrated: but certainly it does seem rather strange that so very bold and atrocious an act as that you describe should be repeated three times under circumstances so similar."

"So it does; but it will be repeated no more with impunity, for all Paris is in commotion about it now. Hitherto, it should seem as if the strange audacity of the deed rendered it so improbable it could be repeated, that both the first and the second crime were suffered to pass by, with no more preparation for preventing their recurrence than if an earthquake, unprecedented in the latitude, had swept away the street where it occurred."

"What is this deed, Romanhoff, that

'Roars so loud and thunders in the index?'

demanding Coventry, who of late had thought

so little, and cared so little, for any subject save one, that if the direful adventure alluded to by his friend had been related in his hearing, it had not made sufficient impression to rest upon his memory.

“What is it? Have you been out of Paris, Coventry?” returned the truly astonished Count.

“No; not positively out of Paris,” said Coventry, laughing. “*Mais fais comme si je n’y étais pas, mon cher*, and I shall understand you better a great deal than I do at present.”

“*Eh bien, mon hermite de la Chaussée d’Antin*, thus it was:—Three weeks ago last Monday—and this you know, or I presume you know, is Wednesday—three weeks ago last Monday, M. Jules Roland, the eldest son of the rich Roland, had won a very considerable sum at Riccordo’s. How much it was I cannot exactly tell you, but I know that a portion of it consisted of a thousand napoleons and five hundred sovereigns, won from an Englishman, because the set who had been

watching the play jested about the weight of it, and told Roland that he must look about for a trusty ticket-porter to carry it. To which he gaily replied, '*Merci, mes amis,*' quoting with his exquisite accent—

‘De labor ve delaught in, phisiques pin.’

Upon which old De Nolonville ejaculated an oath or two against English, but added in a friendly tone, ‘At any rate, young man, keep to the open Boulevard.’

“‘Not a bit of it, M. le Comte,’ replied Roland; ‘I shall do no such thing, but cut across as usual by—by—. Diable! I forget the name, but it was some obscure, little, dark street which lay in his way home. Eh, bien! we all saw him leave the room about two hours past midnight, and several followed soon after; but, as he himself positively states, nobody left the room with him. He says, too, that he did exactly as he said he should do; that is, he turned off the Boulevard into a dark narrow street, and before he had traversed half its length, he was seized from behind in

the arms of a tall powerful man, who contrived so effectually to twist his (Roland's) cloak round his arms and over his mouth, that he was rendered as completely defenceless as if a strait waistcoat had been fastened on him, and as incapable of uttering a cry as if he had been gagged. This done, the villain rifled him of his gold and his notes, and then of his silk pocket-handkerchief; with which last article, however, he did not make off, but employed it in tying the legs of the unfortunate Jules so tightly together, that he was rendered as incapable of flying as of fighting—and thus he was found by the first passer-by on the following morning."

"Did he see the face of the fellow who treated him thus?" demanded Coventry.

"No, not for an instant. The whole of the operations were most skilfully performed from behind him; which led the police to suspect, when they were applied to the next morning, that the scoundrel was some one who knew he should be recognised if seen. Besides, Jules bears testimony to the very gentleman-

like gentleness with which he was gagged and bound ; not an atom more violence having been used, he says, than was absolutely necessary to effect the object in view : from which it is shrewdly inferred that the thief must have been one of the society present when the money was won, and the winner's purpose as to his route declared."

"How dreadful," exclaimed Coventry, "is this idea of consorting with pickpockets and cut-throats ! Will not this, Romanhoff, suffice to keep you in future from haunts where you are so little likely to meet companions deserving the honour of your fellowship ?"

"I suspect that you rate that honour too highly, my good friend," replied the young Russian. "There is fellowship to be met in the *salons* of Riccordero, which my superiors in every way might be well pleased to fall in with."

"In every way !" returned the Englishman. "I doubt it, Romanhoff. But, at any rate, the set who really know each other there ought to ascertain with all despatch who it is

among them who can by possibility be subjected to so horrible a suspicion."

"And that is exactly the business upon which every man of fashion in Paris, except yourself, Coventry, is at this moment occupied. Of course the police is giving us all assistance; but they declare now, that, as nearly as possible, the very same thing has been repeated once and again, precisely as they did at first—that the case is so entirely out of the common way, and so removed from all possibility that their well-organised acquaintance with rogues and vagabonds should assist the discovery of the culprit, that but little is hoped from their interference. It unquestionably is a devilish disagreeable predicament in which we all stand, for there is not one among us, you perceive, who may not be the culprit; and it is certainly paying a very marked personal compliment if any one of the society looks at another with full and perfect assurance that he is not the man."

"And do you mean to return again to this

very mixed society, Romanhoff?" said Alfred, with a good deal of friendly anxiety.

"Why, do you not see, my dear fellow, that in the present state of affairs it would be as much as a man's reputation was worth to be absent from Riccordero's *salon*? Any *habitué* who should venture to withdraw himself at this crisis would be very suspiciously *noté*, you may depend upon it."

"Then I can only rejoice the more that I am not one of them," returned Mr. Coventry, gravely; "and most sincerely wish, my dear friend, that you were in the same category."

"Nonsense, Alfred; you positively look at me with as pitiful a visage as if you thought that, whether going to the *salon* or staying away from it, I was equally liable to suspicion. Why, think for a moment of the noble names to be found in the set you are thus condemning wholesale? I am not the only intimate you have among them: there are D'Obigny, Castello, Reindenberg, De Bruton, Hargrave, Fitzjames, D'Arusez, and a dozen

others at least,—all your right good and very intimate friends: are they all to be as profoundly pitied as I am?"

"No, Romanhoff, very few of them; for very few of them are so greatly capable of doing better. However, God made us all, as Beatrice, or some of her kindred, says. I will detain you no longer from your quest, and honestly wish you all success in it."

While this conversation lasted, the two young men had walked across the gardens to the Rue Costiglione, where they paused; Alfred intending to mount his horse for as quiet and meditative a ride as the Bois de Boulogne could afford, and Romanhoff having a gossiping visit to make in the Place Vendôme.

"*Eh bien, donc,*" said the latter, after their different projects had been explained, "*sans adieu*, we shall meet to-morrow night, if not before, *chez votre digne compatriote M. Hargrave. Dieu! comme il est magnifique, cet homme! en tout ce qu'il fait, c'est véritablement un prince. Eh que les demoiselles sont adorable!*—It is only the aunt," he added, with

something approaching to a shudder, "that makes the advantage of the *entrée* there doubtful. But that woman is a horror,—she positively expects one to make love to her."

"Does she?" said Coventry, laughing. "I hope, at any rate, that one does not mean all?"

"Oh! but it does though . . . nobody can escape her. *Cependant*, I shall venture to-morrow, notwithstanding. *Au revoir!*"

And so they parted; Coventry thinking of the morrow's ball, of which his friend spoke so lightly, with a degree of emotion which almost turned hope into fear, and pleasure into pain: for he had fully made up his mind to seize an opportunity at this ball, amidst the often-found seclusion of a crowd, to open his whole heart to Adèle, and learn from her the destiny of his future life, while others were diligently occupied in selecting their partners for a dance.

CHAPTER VI.

How little we are apt to think as we enter some crowded rendezvous of fashion, and throw a light glance over the light throng entering with us,—how little at such a moment are we apt to think of the various cares, sorrows, fears, and anxieties, that may be entering along with them; they all look so smilingly, or so proudly, or so richly, or so beautifully, that it never enters one's head to remember that every bosom there, be it as fair as it may or as bold as it will, let it palpitate behind a transparent inch of lace, or swell beneath the weight of a dozen decorations, has each its own little museum of cares, which, if laid bare before us, would make the outward coating seem wondrously flimsy.

Not one of all the lovely girls who moved about those splendid rooms of Mr. Hargrave's, like so many full-dressed peris in Paradise, looked more gay, more beautiful, more animated, or more happy, than did Adèle de Cordillac; and yet she would gladly, thankfully, have resigned the chance of ever being present at another *fête*, could she thereby, unknown and unseen, have escaped from this. But she had screwed her courage to the desperate pitch of going through all the dreaded hilarity of that terrible evening, without giving Alfred Coventry the satisfaction of perceiving that she had the slightest objection to receiving him in the character of an uncle. She was shocked herself, poor girl! at the agony which this struggle cost her; but she believed that, could she find strength to get over this first trial, all that followed after would be comparatively easy: and it was this idea which urged her to the feverish energy of exertion which gave such a lustre to her eye, and such a glow to her cheek, as Alfred Coventry thought had never before been equalled on earth.

Nor was poor Adèle's the only heart which throbbed painfully amidst the elegant festivity of that splendid evening. Alfred Coventry's, too, beat painfully,—but this was as much, perhaps, from hope as from fear; and Sabina Hargrave's heart beat painfully,—for it swelled with scorn and indignation towards some; dislike, that approached antipathy, towards others; and towards her sister a degree of pity that positively wrung her to the quick, and made it a task of no easy achievement to keep tears from starting every time she looked at her.

Nor was the condition of Madame de Hautrivage entirely *couleur de rose*; though she considered herself as decidedly the heroine of the hour, and fully believed that, were her interesting situation known, she should be envied by every woman present. But she could not altogether shut her eyes upon the radiant beauty of Adèle, or the youthful loveliness of Sabina; and she certainly did think it unlucky that they should both of them have been dressed so very peculiarly well on that night.

It is probable, therefore, that if among our very restricted acquaintance with the party which filled Mr. Hargrave's magnificent rooms we are able to name four who were ill at ease, it may be safely inferred that the observation was a just one which pointed out the fallacy of festive decoration as a symbol of enjoyment. When it is added that the identical individual who had committed the three audacious robberies related by Count Romanhoff was actually one of the party, and by no means the least gay and graceful person present, it will be allowed that, in the present instance at least, some strong degree of anxiety must have mixed itself with the festivity of the meeting, and of more kinds than one.

Nevertheless, to all outward appearance, every thing went well. *Blasé* as the majority of the company probably were to all sorts of splendour, the tasteful extravagance of Mr. Hargrave contrived to elicit admiration, and almost astonishment, from even the most veteran gazers upon Parisian elegance ; and, excepting such young ladies as were too

deeply engaged in flirtation to see any thing, there was scarcely a single individual in the company who was not quite aware that the whole scene was one of the most splendid they had ever looked upon.

A part of the extensive garden, with its magnificent conservatory, was on this occasion added, at an immense expense, to the suite of rooms on the ground-floor. A wide space between two rows of acacia trees was roofed in, forming a gallery supported by a succession of illuminated arches, and terminating in the green-house, now converted into a retreat for lounging and conversation; while its exotic tenants were scattered in blooming groups along the gallery, enriching the air with their fragrance, and receiving on their dark leaves and brilliant blossoms the soft light of a thousand waxen tapers, mysteriously enhancing their beauty, as it does that of all the other pretty things it falls upon.

The more than common splendour of this sumptuous entertainment had a more specific object than Mr. Hargrave could, in general,

have pleaded in excuse for his boundless extravagance. The youthful brother of a sovereign prince had, during the whole winter, which was now drawing to its close, permitted himself to be the load-star of every *salon* upon which the stamp of fashion was sufficiently impressed to authorise his being invited to enter it. Gallant, gay, animated, and handsome, he was, of course, not only a first-rate personage, but a first-rate favourite wherever he appeared; and happy was the fair one whose hand he selected for the dance. On none had this selection fallen so often as on Sabina Hargrave, and to none had his manner been so respectfully attentive. The mere honour of this distinction would probably have been more keenly felt by any individual of the fair society than it was by herself; but this proceeded not from any sublime contempt for the *prestige* communicated by rank to all other *agréments*, but to the fact that when the prince, at his own request, was first presented to her, his appearance, despite the insignia that glittered on his breast, so

forcibly recalled that of the very simply clad youth she had seen on the rock, whence she gazed on the Mummelsee, and the spectre-like castle beside it, that it was surprise and pleasure, rather than gratified vanity, which his notice excited in her.

However, as he never, in any of the conversations that followed, alluded to the adventure which had befallen her there, and had shaken his head, as a negative, when she had once asked him if he had ever visited Baden-Baden, she was compelled to believe that this resemblance was merely accidental. Nevertheless his rank never produced any flattering or agreeable effect; on the contrary, it only made her conscious of a very painful distance between them. But with her father the case was widely different. His ambition was as unbounded as his vanity; and both together led him to think that, however incongruous such a connexion might be considered in any other family, the pre-eminent distinction to which he had attained in the world of fashion, together with the unrivalled

beauty of his young daughter, would render it a very natural occurrence in his.

This notion once conceived, strengthened with every hour that passed over him, and speedily became the object to which every thought and every act was directed. Mr. Hargrave must be very thoroughly known, and every circumstance of his situation very thoroughly understood, before any adequate idea can be formed of the manner in which such a hope was likely to work within him. That he loved Sabina tenderly and devotedly is most certain ; but not all the joy which the investing one so fondly cherished with all which, in his estimation, made life worth having, would have sufficed to excite the feelings which now possessed him. True, such a marriage was every thing he could have wished on earth for her ; it was every thing he could have wished on earth for himself : but this was not all ; and what remained behind was, even in his estimation, and despite the besotted vanity which still raged within him, of more vital importance, ten thousand-fold, than any marriage

which she could make, or any connexion, were it thrice royal, that he could obtain.

Mr. Hargrave, in fact, at this time stood upon the brink of a precipice, one steady glance down which would probably have sufficed to make him a maniac for life. This steady glance, however, he had never yet given ; nor was there the least chance of his doing so, as long as these buoyant hopes and meteor-like expectations, begot between self-love and imagination, continued to float before him. But Mr. Hargrave was deeply and desperately in debt. The large fortune he had brought with him from England had gradually been dissolving away from the year of his marriage with Madame de Cordillac ; for her comfortable little income of twenty thousand francs was but a drop in the ocean of extravagance, into which the glory of outdoing the noblest and the wealthiest of her high-born connexions immediately plunged him. From that period, the income of his handsome fortune never sufficed to supply his annual expenditure ; and the process of supplying the

deficiency, by drawing upon his capital, though at first apparently a slow one, might have awakened any man to its inevitable consequence who had not lapped himself in the elysium of a variety of visions, all as extravagantly wild as that on which he now seemed determined to risk his last stake.

Prince Frederic of *****, the hero of the romance thus wildly woven in the brain of Hargrave, decidedly thought Sabina Hargrave the prettiest girl he had met in the *salons* of Paris; and never doubting that his station must render the expression of his admiration an honour, unaccompanied by any danger to the young lady's tranquillity, he expressed it on all occasions without the slightest reserve, and to no one with so much flattering enthusiasm as to Mr. Hargrave. It was some complimentary boast of this kind which had put the notion of this splendid *fête* into the head of the speculating father. He knew how delicate, how beautiful, how sweetly tranquil, his Sabina looked, while moving about the splendid halls of his pride, and occasionally

brought forward to notice, by the duties which hospitality demanded of her.

“He shall see her in all her glory,” thought the intoxicated Hargrave: “he shall see her as no Paris beauty of seventeen was ever seen before—he shall see her as a king’s son might glory to see his wife! And should it come to pass, as my prophetic spirit tells me that it will—should I see my Sabina borne to the feet of her brother-in-law’s throne, what will it matter to me as I follow her thither, and with all the affection of a devoted father consent thenceforward to reside beneath her princely roof, what will it then matter to me how many scurvy creditors ungratefully murmur, because a few, among countless thousands, remain unpaid? A *fête* must be given that shall make all Paris stare—it must be done—all things must be done rather than fail; and if means are wanting, means must be found. What is the difference between a man of genius and a dolt, but this—that the one controls circumstances, and that the other yields to them?”

This sapient meditation, with the flourish at

its conclusion, was quite sufficient to put Mr. Hargrave in action; and he set about the needful preliminaries with a feeling of conscious superiority, which made him look almost with an emotion of pity upon every one he met. In short, all the complicated machinery necessary for so great an occasion was set in motion. The gardens were filled with workmen, the invitations sent out, the most desperate efforts made by those who were not of the elect to obtain admission, and means found to supply such an amount of ready money as was absolutely necessary for the undertaking.

Assuredly no preparations ever succeeded better. The royal lips of Prince Frederic expressed again and again his delighted admiration of the brilliant scene; and, better still, no sooner was the waltz over, by which he opened the ball with Sabina, than he asked her to gallop; and no sooner had the gallop ended, than he asked her to walk through a quadrille. In short, if every body but Mr. Hargrave had not perceived that the royal guest was anxious to prove, by his attention to the daugh-

ter of his host, his sense of the compliment paid him by this splendid entertainment, others might have thought as he did, that the royal youth was very decidedly in love.

And in truth, had not the prince been as loyal as royal, he might have been tempted that night to have expressed the admiration he really felt with more tenderness than would have been strictly honourable; for never had the unconscious Sabina looked so beautiful, or acquitted herself so gracefully. Her dearly loved father had told her that this *fête*, given avowedly in compliment to the prince, must greatly depend for its success upon her; and this gave her a motive for exertion which not all the princes of the earth could have excited without it. Perhaps even, so well did she obey her father's bidding, there might have been moments, ere the morning came to chase the enchanting revellers of the night, during which Prince Frederic might have wished that the maiden had been as royal as himself, or he of no higher lineage than her own. But if so it were, Sabina did not find it out, though it

may be that her father did; for as the night advanced, his spirits became more and more exhilarated; and his handsome person, as he graciously paraded it among his guests, seemed to dilate, till he towered above them all.

Meanwhile the fevered Adèle, who had nothing to do in this royal game, proceeded with her own design with undeviating courage and perseverance, and alas! with most perfect and most lamentable success.

If every timid swain, when he finds himself blessed by an occasional *à porte* conversation in a ball-room, knew how exceedingly easy it was for the fair lady to avoid it, if such were her will, he might consider himself as more blessed still.

Mademoiselle de Cordillac, of course, met Mr. Coventry's eager greeting with a charming smile; and when, surrounded by a dozen gay friends, he addressed himself to her alone, she answered him with the most courteous attention: nay, when he asked her to waltz, she waltzed, and, with a heart sinking with disappointment and sorrow, whirled lightly away

before a circle of admiring spectators, with an aspect as bright as her spirit was heavy. But when this was over, and with anxious watchfulness he sought for an opportunity of whispering one sentence in her ear, a sun-beam as it darts from an April cloud is not less amenable to the persuasive "stay!" than was Adèle.

"She did not hear, or did not understand me," thought Alfred; and another hour wore away in ceaseless efforts on his part to arrest an attention which could not be caught, and to give an ear that was deafer than that of any adder in the universe. Yet still he would not admit the belief that she avoided him. "Avoid me!" he murmured, as he watched her light figure glide away at the very moment that he fancied every obstacle removed. "Adèle avoid me! Why should this be? How can I believe it? Has she not danced with me, — smiled upon me? Why should I thus torment myself?" Yet still the night kept wearing on, and still he was no nearer to his object.

Adèle, meanwhile, paid little or no attention to what might or might not have passed be-

tween Mr. Coventry and her aunt. Not an atom of the littleness which in a mind of less elevation would have mixed itself with her misery, found place in hers. Her soul was wrung with shame and sorrow, because she was conscious that she had loved ere she had been wooed; and she threw no thought away upon the probable absurdities of the courtship which, upon such excellent authority, she knew was going on. She watched not to see how ridiculous Madame de Hautrivage might be making herself, or how well, or how ill, her contemptible *futur* played the part of her lover. Had her mind been sufficiently commonplace to permit her looking out for all this, it is possible that she might have seen enough to shake her faith, even in the solemn asseveration of her mother's sister; — and Alfred Coventry might not have left the house, among the very last of the lingering guests, bearing in his heart the conviction that Adèle de Cordillac was the most accomplished coquet in France, and himself the most unhappy Englishman who had ever suffered his peace to be

wrecked in pursuit of an object so every way unworthy.

Poor Madame de Hautrivage, indeed, did not long enjoy the sweet delusion into which she had fallen. No acknowledged beauty of twenty, however, can ever have dressed for conquest with less apprehension of failure, and more assured certainty of success, than she did upon this eventful evening. During the two hours thus occupied, and the delicious twenty minutes afterwards given to the contemplation of the finished work, and in which the pride of the artist joined itself with the pride of the woman,—during this interval the faded, yet glowing Clementine de Hautrivage, was in a truly enviable state of mind. But here ended her portion of the evening's enjoyment. It was not her wish to make her *entrée* while the rooms were empty; she knew that the assumed grace with which a fine woman, *avec une toilette irréprochable*, wins her way on entering a suite of rooms about half full, especially when she is at home and has to dispense her smiling welcomes as she moves along, produces an effect

which triumphant generals might envy, and nymphs of sixteen wish for in vain. Mr. Coventry, therefore, was already in the room when she swam into it; and desirous, in the first instance, rather of attracting notice than of bestowing it, she contented her fond heart by placing herself where she was quite sure of being seen by him; and there awaited the eager and delighted salutation of the man she favoured. But, alas! it came not. That he saw her, unfortunately admitted not of the slightest doubt; for during the space of three seconds his eyes were directed towards her, and he performed one of those slight, but civil bows, which, in general, can be neither flattering nor offensive; because, for the most part, they are just what the occasion requires, and no more. But in the case of the unfortunate Madame de Hautrivage, a pistol aimed and discharged at her head would have been infinitely less affronting.

“ For one moment, and no more,”

the delightful possibility that some new and unexpected effect in her brilliant costume might

have deceived him, and that he recognised not the splendid figure before him as his affianced Clementina,—for one short moment this hope sustained her, but in the next it was gone for ever : for she perceived, beyond the possibility of mistake, that he spake something to Adèle, with whom he was conversing, which caused her to turn her eyes towards her ; and the half-melancholy smile with which she nodded to her aunt, and then glided away among the crowd, shewed plainly enough that on perceiving her she had with perfect propriety avoided the *gaucherie* of detaining her lover from her side, although it probably cost her a pang to resign him.

But what did the lover do ? Did he profit by his release to fly to her ? Alas ! no. With the most perfect indifference as to being remarked or not, Coventry looked after Adèle, and then followed her in a way which, to an eye so experienced as that of Madame de Hautrivage, left not a shadow of doubt as to her being at that moment the object which wholly occupied him.

“*Je m’y connais !*” thought the unhappy lady. And the thought expressed no vain boast of her skill. She really did understand all such matters perfectly ; and the acuteness of the Frenchwoman overpowered the vanity of the venerable coquette. “ I see it,” she inwardly exclaimed,—“ I see it all. *Bête !—Bête Anglaise !—Dieu merci !* no Frenchman could be thus equivocal !” Yet, notwithstanding this movement of gratitude for native blessings, her feelings were far from agreeable ; nor were they rendered at all more so by this same keenness of awakened observation during the remainder of the evening. The unfortunate *bévue* concerning the portrait had so completely mystified her, and her long-established habits of love-making so assisted the mistake, that she really and truly believed the young Englishman had fallen in love with her, and the more easily laid herself under “ the soft impeachment,” from not being able to assign any other cause for his *not* proposing for her niece, when she had so obligingly opened the way for him to do so. But now that

English *bêtise* suggested itself as an interpretation of all these lamentable mistakes, she perceived her blunder with very disagreeable distinctness.

As far as the young man himself was concerned, the accident did not give her the slightest uneasiness. She detested Englishmen, and from her very soul scorned their ignorance of all the graces of *légèreté*, and of all that is beautiful, moral, and sublime, in that species of *amour volage* which her countrymen (and women) alone understand; where change has no mixture of inconstancy, and where infidelity is a sin and a sorrow unknown. Yes! Madame de Hautrivage detested Englishmen, and would have felt a marriage with the wealthy Coventry a tremendous sacrifice to the tyranny of circumstances; therefore the loss of him might have been easily endured. But she perceived, in the course of this long night's observations, that she had—quite unintentionally, good lady!—thrown the prospect of poor Adèle's excellent match into utter confusion. She saw that the

gentleman was more devoted than ever, but that the lady, too young as yet to comprehend the probability of his making love to two women at once, and, in short, simply believing the extremely false tale she had told, shunned every opportunity of being drawn into conversation by him, and would now unquestionably consider any offer of marriage from him as equally offensive to her aunt and to herself. This was exceedingly disagreeable ; but it was by no means the only penalty she had to pay for the folly of believing that a coarse-minded, unpolished Englishman was as capable of choosing an old woman in preference to a young one as a Frenchman. She had also, as she well knew, to undergo the ceremony of appearing in the eyes of her young nieces as *avoir été jouée* by an Englishman !—It was dreadful !

It was only towards the close of the entertainment, and during her fourth attendance at the supper-table with some guest whom she particularly wished to honour, that, just after having once more refreshed herself with

a glass of champagne and iced water, it suddenly occurred to her that she might pass off the whole matter as a jest. Coventry, she clearly perceived, had not the slightest suspicion of the blunder she had made; and as it was equally evident that he was as much occupied with Adèle as unoccupied about her, she easily persuaded herself to believe that matters would speedily be set right between them. All, therefore, that she should have to do would be to laugh at her niece for the facility with which she had received the hoax played upon her; and no living being but herself would be aware that the *chère amie* of so many gallant hearts had at last listened to a declaration of love to her niece, and fancied that it was intended for herself.

The eye of an Asmodeus, in looking down upon the crowded haunts of men, can descry what is passing among them with much greater rapidity than he can record it; and, in like manner, the historian, however gifted with the power of discerning, must content himself with relating a vast deal less than he sees.

Many curious and interesting sketches of the easy, amusing, and varied tone of the cosmopolite circle usually assembled in a first-rate English *salon* at Paris might here be given, were there time and space for it. But it may not be; the narrative concerns but a few, and a few only can appear in it. Enough has, perhaps, already been said respecting such of those as were present at Mr. Hargrave's ball, to give an idea of the manner in which they spent the evening; excepting, indeed, that one very general subject of conversation has not been alluded to, which, as it pervaded every group, and appeared to interest every individual present, could not, of course, be altogether uninteresting to any of them.

The recent outrages practised upon the successful players, as they pursued their way from Riccordero's to their several homes, was still so foremost in all men's thoughts, that few spake together for many minutes without its being brought upon the *tapis*.

Many of the gentlemen present belonged to the society which, at that time, assembled

nightly at this fashionable rendezvous for idleness and high play; and those who did not felt scarcely less interested than themselves in the discussion of an affair which seemed to involve the safety of all Paris, and to compromise very disagreeably the high reputation of its police. Nor were the ladies a whit less anxious to hear all that was to be gathered on the subject than the gentlemen; whoever appeared to have any thing to say upon it was eagerly listened to, and happy was the man who had picked up any atom of intelligence upon this thrilling theme.

Of all the talkers on it, Count Romanhoff was, perhaps, the one listened to with the greatest avidity; and there were many good reasons for this. In the first place, he was extremely handsome; in the second, he was extremely voluble, omitting no single circumstance which could excite interest, and speaking with such perfect facility, both in English and French, as to make him answer all questions in the language in which they were asked, and thus making himself equally in-

telligible to all. In addition to this, he had all the charm in speaking of this extraordinary occurrence which is given by a lively imagination, when the subject discussed is peculiarly exciting to it. Never, as he declared, had any thing so strongly interested him before; and, the fact of his having, for nearly two years, constantly frequented the *salon*, rarely passing a night during some part of which he did not enter there, being freely avowed, and pretty generally known, gave such authority to all he said, that

“ Where he stood there men did congregate ; ”

and his version of the story soon became the ground-work upon which all other talkers constructed their own.

Among his other listeners, he had the honour of attracting the ear of Prince Frederic, who, seated on a sofa surrounded by a circle of fair ladies, most of them sitting with the partner with whom they had just waltzed leaning on their chairs, chanced to catch a

word or two of the oft-repeated tale from a group at a little distance, of which Romanhoff was the centre. His Royal Highness, who was well acquainted with him, called to him by name, and the young Russian was in an instant before him.

“ Were you at the *salon*, Count, when this last unlucky gamester walked forth with his gold, unwarned by the adventure of his predecessors ?” demanded the Prince.

“ I was there on that night, Monseigneur, and on both the preceding ones, when the former outrages took place.”

“ May I ask, without indiscretion, if you were playing ?”

“ Twice out of the three times, Monseigneur, I was not.”

“ Were the rooms crowded, Romanhoff ?”

“ No, your Highness ; certainly not at the time that the winners left them.”

“ Have you any recollection,” resumed the Prince, fixing on him a look that expressed much interest,—“ have you any distinct recollection of the persons remaining in the room

when the tables at which the successful gamblers played broke up?"

"I distinctly remember several, your Highness, though probably not all," replied the Count, with a slight embarrassment of manner.

It is probable that the Prince perceived this, for he changed the subject; and addressing Sabina, who was seated beside him, said,—

"I trust you are not tired, Mademoiselle Hargrave, and that your kindness will accord me another waltz before your charming party breaks up?"

"I shall be very happy, Monseigneur," she replied, with all the smiling satisfaction she could muster; but at that moment her eye chanced to be fixed on Adèle, whose feverish animation having faded away, had left her pale, languid, and fatigued. She had joined the circle round the Prince expressly to elude poor Coventry's evident desire to speak to her, and had endeavoured, with all sincerity, to listen to what was going on, in the vain hope of being able for a moment to forget him.

Prince Frederic, as he spoke to Miss Hargrave, remarked the direction of her soft and sympathising eye, and, turning his own in the same direction, was struck by Adèle's pale cheek and weary aspect.

"On my honour I fear we are indiscreet," he said, "in keeping up these delightful revels so long. Mademoiselle de Cordillac's fair cheek ought to be on her pillow. Is it not so?"

"Oh, no, Monseigneur," replied Adèle, rousing herself. "I have been listening with only too much interest to your Highness's questions, and the Count Romanhoff's replies, concerning these horrible adventures; and I only wish your Highness had proceeded,—I long to hear more."

"*Ah! ça cher Comte, poursuivez donc, je vous conjure,*" said Prince Frederic. "But take care," he added, "that you do not make your narrative too interesting, for it has certainly blanched one lovely cheek already."

"Alas! your Highness, the more the story is dwelt upon, the more profound must the

impression become ; and, perhaps, Mademoiselle de Cordillac had better listen to no more of it."

"Nay, nay, you suspect me of more weakness than I feel, Count Romanhoff. I shall hold myself greatly obliged to you, if, with his Royal Highness's permission, you will go back exactly to the point where you stopped, and tell us if you remember, on all or either of these occasions, having remarked the presence of persons who were apparently strangers to the society, and whom you did not remember to have seen before?" said Adèle.

Every eye was turned upon Count Romanhoff in anxious expectation of his answer.

"I cannot say I did," replied the Count, after a pause.

"Where is papa going?" said Adèle, affecting, perhaps, more interest than she felt. "Though he does not play, I know he is often at the *salon*.—Let us examine him."

Mr. Hargrave, though he had not danced with either of the ladies seated near the Prince,

had nevertheless, in his character of host, ventured to approach the little circle, too happy at perceiving the juxtaposition of his daughter and his royal guest; but having satisfied himself, as it seemed, that all in that quarter was as he wished it to be, he was moving off, when Prince Frederic, at the suggestion of Adèle, stopped him by saying,—

“ Let me entreat you not to leave our *coterie*, Monsieur Hargrave. We want you to assist Count Romanhoff’s memory with yours. Were you at Riccordo’s on either of the nights in question?”

“ Yes, Monseigneur, I was,” said Mr. Hargrave, quietly.

“ *Mais oui, mon cher Monsieur,*” said the eager Romanoff, “ you were there on all the three evenings?”

“ No, Count, I think you are mistaken there,” said Mr. Hargrave. “ On the first, and on the last, I was not only there, but remained, if I recollect rightly, till the rooms were quite empty. I was interested on both

evenings, as I well remember, by a game of piquet that I was watching. But on the second evening I think I was at the Opera."

"Pardon, Monsieur!" said a voice from behind the chair of a fair duchess, who had placed herself in front of the Prince in the hope of being selected by him for the next dance,—“Pardon, Monsieur!” said the gentleman who had been her partner in the last, “but I think you were at the Opera and the *salon* both on the night of the second outrage.”

“It may be so,” returned Mr. Hargrave, bowing to him with a courteous smile, for he was a man of very distinguished rank; “and it is, indeed, highly probable that your Excellency is right: for I am so much in the habit of dropping into Riccordero’s to see how things are going on, that my coachman often stops there without my bidding him.”

“Ah!” returned the same gentleman, “the horses and servants of you men of fashion pay a dreadful penalty for the interest excited by

the tables at Riccordo's. Do you never feel a touch of pity for them, M. Hargrave, and walk home?"

"Indeed I do, your Excellency," returned Mr. Hargrave. "I very often send my carriage home from thence, and follow it on foot."

"Excuse me, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur," interrupted the Prince—for the personage who had joined the conversation was of no lesser rank,—“but you have stopped M. Hargrave, who, I believe, was going to tell us, in reply to the very pertinent question of his charming *belle fille*, whether, on either of the eventful evenings in question, he remarked, in Riccordo's *salon*, any person not absolutely an *habitué* there?—This is, surely, very important. I am aware that the society accustomed to meet there is numerous—too much so for any one of them to feel capable of answering for all the rest, as he would for his familiar friends. Nevertheless, it would certainly be very agreeable for all these gentlemen, could it be proved, that on each of

the three nights in question, persons, or some person, totally a stranger to them all, had been remarked there. You, M. Hargrave, as well as our friend the Count, seem to have been present on every one of these occasions—did you remark any individual whom you were not accustomed to see there?”

“I think, your Highness—I think I did,” replied Mr. Hargrave slowly, and apparently giving great attention to the question, but not feeling perfectly certain how to reply to it. “But the fact is,” he added, “that my attention is always so devoted to some particularly interesting game or other (which saves me, your Highness, from the danger of playing myself), that I am the last man in the world to give such an account of the company as may be depended on.”

“The circumstance of your not playing would seem, on the contrary, to point you out as one of the very first to whom we should apply,” said the ambassador. “Do endeavour to recall every thing that occurred, M. Hargrave. If you have an idea, however vague,

that you really did remark some figure which you were not accustomed to see there, you must, I presume, have also an idea, if not a distinct one, as to what sort of figure it was. Is it not so?"

"How admirably Monsieur le Diplomate examines!" exclaimed the Prince, starting up, and presenting his hand to Sabina. "But, unhappily, the process must always be rather tedious, and there is something very like sin in wasting such moments as the present by turning a court of beauty into a court of law!"

These last words were for Sabina alone, and uttered nearly in a whisper, as he led her to the top of the ball-room. But his movement indicated, with sufficient clearness, that he thought the subject of the robbery was pretty well worn out; and this was quite enough to make it *mauvais ton* to talk of it in any voice above a whisper for the rest of the evening.

The evening, however, or, more properly speaking, the night, was drawing to a close. The appearance of his Royal Highness, walking up the room with a fair *danseuse* on his

arm, was a signal for the weary orchestra once more to pour forth notes that might revive the worn-out energies of the most lazy of listeners. His Excellency, meanwhile, with an air *tout soit peu piqué*, took his departure, and Mr. Hargrave once more indulged in the soothing occupation of watching the lofty head of Prince Frederic bending itself to the level of the fair Sabina. Oh! what a world of happy emblematic augury was there in that spectacle! Neither the consciousness of ruined fortunes, nor any of the anxieties which ensued from it, could prevent Mr. Hargrave from tasting again all the exquisite pleasure of gratified vanity and strengthening hope.

As he made his way to a convenient sofa, from whence, without being too conspicuous, he might enjoy the spectacle which gave birth to this delicious reverie, the dispirited and miserable-looking Coventry passed him in his way out. He had not intended to address Adèle again; but she, too, was in his path, and he stopped, almost involuntarily, to speak to her.

“You are going, Mr. Coventry,” she said,

with an air of gay reproach, and looking at his hat, which he carried in his hand.

“Indeed I think it is time, Mademoiselle,” he replied; “even your roses have somewhat faded since the ball began, and I never saw your father look so ill.”

“Does he?” said Mademoiselle de Cordillac, looking towards him with some anxiety: “I have not remarked it.”

“Then, perhaps, it is not so. Perhaps I only see the reflection of the weary, wretched feelings of my own heart! — Farewell, Mademoiselle de Cordillac!”

And without even waiting for a look in reply, Alfred Coventry disappeared.

“Wretched and weary feelings!” murmured Adèle, remaining on the spot where he had left her, and unconsciously keeping her eyes fixed on the door by which he had passed out. “What can he mean? — Oh! what can he mean by calling his feelings wretched? — Why should Alfred Coventry be wretched? He has chosen his bride—he has wooed—he has won her! There can be no wretchedness

in this, let her be who or what she may ; for, was it not his choice? Why should Alfred Coventry be wretched?"

But it was in vain she continued to gaze through the vacant door, no one appeared there to answer her. She looked round the room for this chosen bride of the unfortunate young man who so frankly avowed himself to be wretched, despite his success, and almost determined to name him to her, that she might mark her countenance, and so learn if any thing unpleasant had passed between them. But Madame de Hautrivage was nowhere to be seen; and feeling herself, now that all reason for exertion was over, hardly able to stand, she, too, stole off, leaving a whirling circle of lighter hearts than her own to watch the daylight of a bright spring morning, peeping through the windows of the conservatory, as if to scatter the rear of dancers within, as it had already done the rear of darkness without.

CHAPTER VII.

“WELL, Adèle!” said Madame de Hautrivage, on joining the late breakfast-table on the following morning, and addressing her niece with a sort of mystifying air, intended to appear extremely jocose—“well, Adèle, have you found me out? And are you ready to confess that you are the very readiest *mouette* that ever was led off upon a false scent?”

“Confess what, aunt?” returned the heavy-eyed Adèle. “I do not understand you.”

“*Charmant!—Admirable!—C’est parfait!—mais c’est parfait!*” returned Madame de Hautrivage.

Perfectly unable to comprehend what all this might mean, Mademoiselle de Cordillac

shook her head, languidly attempted to smile, but said no more.

“*Et toi, Sabina!* have you not, with all your prodigious reading and meditative sedateness,—have you not wisdom enough to discover the delicious trick I have played upon your sister?—*Mais c'est incroyable!*”

“*Vraiment, ma tante,*” replied Sabina, while a feeling nearly resembling contempt curled her pretty lips, “I am totally unable to comprehend you.”

“Then you are, both of you, the very silliest pair of children I ever met with. You still believe, then, Adèle, that M. Alfred de Coventry is about to be taken by me *en seconde noce?*”

“I cannot do otherwise than believe what you told me, madame,” replied Adèle, but with considerable less languor than before. “But if I misunderstood what you intended to say, I shall be obliged to you if you will explain yourself farther.”

“*Eh bien, donc, ma pauvre petite!* don't look so tremendously grave, because it is too

ridiculous to turn *les petites plaisanteries d'un esprit, gai comme le mien*, into sober earnest! But the fact is, that I told you all that long story about M. Coventry merely to try a little experiment. I wanted to find out whether you really were as vulgarly in love, in *la mode Anglaise*, as I suspected. Of the young man's attachment to you, though he has not yet taken courage to make his proposals in form (*excusez, ma chère, mais les Anglais sont tout peu bête*),—of his attachment and intentions towards you there could be no doubt; but, feeling that there would be something offensively indelicate in hinting to a young person like you, Adèle, that I thought it possible she could like one man better than another, I resolved, if possible, to obtain the information I wished for by stratagem. But little did I imagine, my dear, that you could be *bête* enough to let *ma petite supercherie* continue in force after you had seen your lover. For shame, Adèle!—how could you be so foolish as to imagine that I was going *myself* to marry young Mons. Alfred de Coventry?"

All the suffering which this deception had brought upon her—all the lost happiness which she might have enjoyed during the hours of the preceding evening, flashed through the mind of Adèle in an instant. But she was constitutionally sweet-tempered and constitutionally gay; and, instead of resenting the misery her aunt had, by her own account, thus wantonly caused her, she was *almost* ready to embrace her for the joy her present statement brought. Never, as she told Sabina when they were again *tête-à-tête*, never had she known before what happiness meant!

“Surely, Sabina,” she said, “the good God must have sent sorrow into the world in order to make us value, at its worth, the blessings he sends with it. Is it a sin, dearest,—is it indelicate, to feel so very, *very* much delighted as I do at remembering all the love I read in poor Alfred’s eyes last night? Oh! he did look so wretched when he left me! And I behaved to him, Sabina,—you can have no idea how I treated him! So much civil contempt and gay indifference! Dear Alfred! And he, all the time, being, I do verily be-

lieve, almost as wretched as I was myself. But, thank Heaven, it is passed! Where do you think I shall first see him again, Sabina?"

"Not here, I fear, dear Adèle," replied her sister, with a look in which anger and vexation still lingered: "he can hardly be expected to volunteer a visit after being treated as you describe."

"Then he must be invited, Sabina," said Adèle, laughing. "I do not intend to stand upon much ceremony with him now, I promise you. If I could but make you comprehend how I treated him last night, you would be aware of the necessity of being a little more than commonly civil to him now. Had I any doubt about his loving me, it would be a different thing, you know; but even in the midst of all my misery last night, I saw that. In short, I believed him to be as audaciously false as he was meanly mercenary,—at once a traitor to my foolish aunt and to me. And, after unjustly loading him with such foul suspicions, think you not, Sabina, that I owe him some atonement? Think you not that we

might, without impropriety, desire papa to invite him here?"

"Indeed I do," returned Sabina. "Prince Frederic told me last night that papa had invited him to dinner; and if his gay-hearted Royal Highness has not made a blunder, I will beg my father to let Mr. Coventry be one of the party invited to meet him. Shall I, Adèle?"

"Yes, dearest, yes! It will be a most flattering mark of distinction. How sweet of you to think of it! But I had no idea, Sabina, that the Prince was coming to dine here. What an extraordinary man your father is, Sabina! Where will you find another man, without rank, title, or political importance of any kind, holding the situation that he does here? He certainly has most charming talents; and I like Prince Frederic for the marked distinction he shews him. It really will be a great compliment paid to a private English gentleman. I don't think he can have made any blunder about papa having invited him: do you?"

"I do not feel quite sure about it," replied

Sabina ; “ and I do not think the Prince felt quite sure about it himself, because his phrase was, ‘ *Si je ne me trompe pas, votre aimable papa m’a prié :*’ but he did not say a word about the day when this honour was to fall upon us.”

“ Let us go to the library and ask papa all about it,” said Adèle, rising gaily from her chair. “ I suppose he is up by this time ; though poor Coventry’s last words, by the by, just before he left the rooms, were that papa looked ill. I dare say he must have been excessively tired. Miserable as I was, I could not help observing how admirably he did the honours.”

“ Dear, dear papa !” returned Sabina, fervently, “ how I do love him ! And do you know, Adèle, I am quite convinced that all this immense trouble that he takes is for us. I cannot bear to see him look as pale as he did last night while that tiresome Count Romanhoff was prosing away at such terrible length about the business at Riccordo’s. It struck me instantly, as I observed it, that he had been

exerting himself beyond what could be pleasant to him. . . . I hope, if he *does* give this dinner, that it will not fatigue him, as I am certain the ball did last night."

"Fatigue him, Sabina! Oh! nonsense, my dear! I know no person in the whole circle of Paris *bon ton* who appears to enjoy society so much as your father; and as to *receiving*, it is evidently his delight: so don't you go, you foolish girl, and endeavour to persuade him that he is too delicate in health to preside at a dinner without danger of turning pale before the end of it. I should excessively enjoy this *dîner des élites*, I confess. Come, Sabina, let us go to him."

Nothing could be more amiable or more endearing than the terms on which the graceful widower lived with the two young girls whom his beautiful wife had left in his charge. An excellent library—one of the rarest accompaniments to domestic comfort and elegance to be found in the French capital—was the room in which Mr. Hargrave always took his breakfast and spent the first hours of the morn-

ing; but there was nothing sulky in this retreat, for Adèle and Sabina were not only permitted egress and regress without restraint, but were made very clearly to understand that they could in no way please him better than by coming to chat with him there on all the *petits politiques* of the *salons*, and that with as much freedom and unreserve as if they were still gossiping to each other in their own boudoir.

It was, therefore, with all confidence of a cordial welcome that the two sisters took their way, arm in arm, to the library; but when Adèle laid her hand upon the lock she found that the door was fastened from within.

“Good Heaven! he is not up yet!” cried Sabina, with a feeling of alarm. “Indeed, Adèle, I am afraid he is ill!”

“No such thing,” returned her sister, gaily. “I am sure I hear him in the room.” And playing a light tattoo with her delicate knuckles on the door, she cried, “*Ouvrez, monsieur, s’il vous plait.*”

The summons was immediately answered,

not by the opening of the door, but by the voice of Mr. Hargrave, who, apparently too busy to come to them immediately, said, cheerfully, “ *Attendez, mes belles, pour un instant ;*” and for a few minutes they remained standing at the door. This was so unusual, that when at length Mr. Hargrave, still *en robe de chambre*, opened it to them, Adèle, whose spirits, always gay, were now exuberant, seized upon him as he appeared within it, exclaiming, “ What have you been about, *notre papa* ? I arrest you *au nom du roi*. Nothing short of having some treasonable correspondence to hide could have made you, the most *preux des chevaliers*, keep two beautiful damsels waiting so long at your door.”

Sabina, who with her loving eyes fixed on her father’s face, was waiting for her morning salute, till her sister should have released him, almost screamed at the sudden change in his complexion which she remarked, as with smiles and caresses he returned the address of Adèle, and after the interval of a moment, extended a hand to each and led them towards the fire.

“You are not well, papa!” she exclaimed, “I am quite sure of it. Adèle says that Mr. Coventry remarked last night ——”

“Remarked what?” interrupted Mr. Hargrave, abruptly. “Who remarked? What do you mean, Sabina?”

“Only, dearest papa, that Mr. Coventry remarked your looking pale and fatigued last night; and I cannot help thinking myself that you are looking unwell to-day. I suppose it is impossible for any body to be so completely the centre of a large circle as you were last night — so entirely the main-spring of all that was agreeable and animated throughout the whole evening — without feeling fatigued by it.”

“You little flatterer!” exclaimed Mr. Hargrave, fondly kissing her, and at once chasing all fears for his health by the gaiety and animation of his manner. “There were others, methinks, who were more like a main-spring of all that was agreeable than your antiquated father, Sabina. What say you, *par exemple*, to Prince Frederic?”

“Oh, certainly, he was very agreeable too!”

replied Sabina; "and it is exactly about him that we are come to talk to you, papa."

"Exactly about him, papa," joined in Adèle. "Is it true that you have invited him to dinner?"

"Invited him to dinner! No, indeed, I have not. Though I am sure if I thought the invitation would be agreeable to him he should have it directly. What was it put this notion into your head, Adèle?"

"Nay, papa, not into my head. It was put into Sabina's head, and that by no other than his Royal Highness himself."

"Is this so, my dearest Sabina?" demanded Mr. Hargrave, his whole countenance suddenly lighted up with an expression of hope and joy that might almost be described as ecstasy. "Did the Prince express a wish that I should invite him to dinner?"

"Why, no, papa, that is not exactly the way I should describe what passed. Prince Frederic said, he *thought* you had asked him to dinner, and most certainly he seemed very well inclined to come. But he did not say

that he hoped you would ask him," replied Sabina.

"The difference is but trifling, my love—very trifling indeed," rejoined her father. "Of course there is no doubt, my dear girls, about his being asked. The only question remaining to be solved is, whether it shall be a state party, as I may call such a one as I *could* give him, or a domestic one. I must have your judgment upon this, my dear girls, before I definitively pronounce my own. What is your opinion, Sabina? Which of these styles do you think he would prefer?"

"Before I can answer, papa, you must tell me what you mean by a state party," replied Sabina.

"By a state party, dearest, I mean one consisting entirely of personages of the very highest rank that I can venture to invite; and I am happy to say that this excludes very few, even of the very highest. Of course, if the entertainment be given upon this footing, every thing must be in accordance with it—every thing must be in the very highest

style of splendour, and no one whatever of plebeian rank admitted," replied Mr. Hargrave, with great animation. "But, on the other hand, Sabina," he added, after the pause of a moment, and fixing an inquiring gaze on the face of his daughter, "on the other hand, Sabina, if you think he would be equally well, or better pleased by being received almost, as it were, *en famille*, of course I can have no objection to it."

"Well then, papa, that is what I think he would like best," eagerly replied Sabina, whose predominating idea through the whole conversation was the getting Alfred Coventry invited. She had sympathised too sincerely with all that Adèle had suffered concerning him not to feel as desirous as herself that all things should be set right between them; and she was, perhaps, more alarmed than her sister by the idea that the apparently capricious treatment he had received might cause a lasting separation. An invitation to meet Prince Frederic at dinner, especially if the party consisted of a few only, could not fail of being

acknowledged by him as a very flattering distinction; and every word she uttered on the subject had this origin and this object. Poor Sabina! she little guessed the importance of every syllable she spoke.

Mr. Hargrave listened to her as if his life, and her life too, hung upon what she said; and the joy—the rapture, which thrilled through his whole frame as he heard Sabina frankly acknowledge, with her innocent “well then, papa,” that she thought Prince Frederic would like a domestic party best, actually brought tears into his eyes. But he felt that this was not the stage of the business at which it would be wise to let such emotion appear, and stooping to arrange the fading embers of the fire, he contrived to subdue this vehemence of feeling before it was observed.

“And you, Adèle,” he resumed, turning gaily to Mademoiselle de Cordillac, “what is your opinion on the subject? Do you also think that his Royal Highness would rather be received here *en bon ami* than *en grand seigneur*?”

Now the fact decidedly was, that Mademoiselle de Cordillac had thought less about his Royal Highness Prince Frederic, his merits or demerits, his likings or dislikings, than any other individual in Paris, perhaps, who had been equally often in his company. Young ladies, as much in love as was our Adèle, will not attribute this remarkable indifference on her part to any radical contempt or aversion to princes or principedoms, but to a cause which they will perfectly well understand. However, when Mr. Hargrave thus demanded her opinion on a point upon which she fancied that somebody else was concerned as well as Prince Frederic, her countenance betokened a little confusion, but no indifference, as she replied,—

“ From what Sabina says, papa, I have no doubt that he would prefer a small private party to one that was stately and ceremonious.”

There were two distinct feelings which caused Mademoiselle de Cordillac to blush as she said this. The first arose from the con-

sciousness that Sabina had, in truth, said nothing whatever to her which might justify her forming an opinion on the subject; and the second from feeling that what she was saying arose from a motive so decidedly selfish, and so utterly impossible to be acknowledged, that she was very nearly ashamed of herself for uttering it.

But what would she have felt, could she have guessed the interpretation put both upon her words and the blush by which they were accompanied? Mr. Hargrave, in common with every one well acquainted with her, had a very high opinion of Adèle's judgment and powers of observation: the delicacy and genuine modesty of her character were equally well known to him; and it was pretty nearly impossible that she could have expressed herself in any manner better calculated to impress him with the belief that her opinion of Prince Frederic's views was exactly the same as his own. At that moment his happiness could scarcely have been augmented by hearing the young man declare his passion in form. All doubt—all hesi-

tation vanished entirely from his mind, and he only longed to be alone, that he might give himself up to the unrestrained enjoyment of the prospect before him, and to the means by which the costly splendour which surrounded him might be sustained till his Sabina became Princess Frederic of *****.

“ Now, dear girls, you must go,” he said. “ You remember that I was very busy when you came,—so much so, as you perceived, that I locked myself in ; a precaution exceedingly rare for me to take, because as you both, I believe, pretty well know, the oftener I see your saucy faces peeping in upon me, the better I am pleased. But the fact is, that I have various papers which I am anxious to look over and arrange, and shall therefore certainly suffer no one but your two fair selves to break in upon me.”

“ We will vanish instantly, papa,” said Sabina ; “ but I have one very great favour to ask before I go, and I do assure you that I have a very particular reason for it, which, perhaps, one of these days I will tell you.

Will you be so very kind, when you invite Prince Frederic, as to invite Mr. Coventry to meet him?"

A score of merry smiles seemed playing about Mr. Hargrave's mouth as he answered her. He had not been insensible to his distinguished young countryman's attention to his step-daughter, and was sufficiently well informed of his fortune and position in society to make him exceedingly well pleased at believing that he would propose for her. This marriage would be such as even Prince Frederic might approve, and it would, unquestionably, be much more desirable that Adèle should be married, than appear at the court of ***** as a hanger-on upon her sister. That *he* should accompany her, share her greatness, watch over her happiness, and augment it, as he had ever done, by his devoted affection, was in every way desirable. But this was enough; it was better she should have no more relations thrown upon her.

"Mr. Coventry must be asked, must he?" was the question by which Sabina's petition

was answered; but it was uttered in a tone that left no fear for its success. "And does Adèle," he continued, "approve this also?"

"Never mind, papa, about that," replied Sabina, laughing, and leading off her sister. "I am your own daughter, you know, and I shall think it very cruel if you refuse me, and be jealous as a Turk, I assure you, if you should deem it necessary to apply to her about it."

"Very well then, Mademoiselle Hargrave, I will take my orders from you, as in duty bound. Mr. Coventry shall be asked, and will, I dare say, have the kindness to excuse its being only a sort of—of family party. Next Wednesday, I presume, will be distant enough for so unceremonious an invitation; and when you have fairly disappeared, young ladies, I will write a note to Prince Frederic, another to Coventry; and, if you object not, I will also invite le Duc et la Duchesse de Vermont, which will take off,—that is, I mean, will give a better air to the party."

The young ladies having distinctly expressed

their approbation respecting every part of this arrangement, and each received a kiss from its projector, retired ; leaving Mr. Hargrave one of the happiest, if not the very happiest, man in Paris.

CHAPTER VIII.

NOTHING could exceed the general feeling of hilarity which seemed on that day to pervade every part of Mr. Hargrave's family. The cause of his own intoxicating exhilaration has been already sufficiently explained, as well as that of the so lately wretched Adèle. Sabina's contentment, sweet soul! arose from believing that she had set matters *en train* for re-establishing a good understanding between her sister and the man she so evidently loved, despite all the laws of French etiquette and established usage. Nor was Madame de Hautrivage much behind the rest of this happy family in contentment; for she was greatly relieved from sundry tormenting fears by hearing that Mr. Coventry had been invited to

dinner, in a manner so flattering as, beyond all question, to atone for any offence he might have received from the altered manners of Mademoiselle de Cordillac ; and, moreover, she was very far from being insensible to the honour and glory of being one of a family where a royal prince was invited to dinner with as much freedom as a private gentleman. Of her brother-in-law's ulterior views she knew nothing ; that gentleman having very judiciously decided in his own mind that her participation in the business might very probably do harm, but could by no possibility be productive of good.

Before the family met at dinner, an answer had arrived from the Prince, most graciously accepting the invitation, and couched in terms of such amiable condescension that Mr. Hargrave felt, as he read it, as if he were already his son. The answer given at the hôtel where Mr. Coventry lodged, was, that he was out of town, but that the note should be given to him as soon as he returned.

This seemed to satisfy them all : even Adèle

would not suffer herself to feel disappointed at not receiving a less doubtful answer, reasonably consoling her spirit with the reflection that, even if Alfred Coventry did not return in time to accept it, the conciliatory object of the note would not be lost upon him, and that it was not very likely he should omit coming to thank her father for it.

The late hour at which they had all retired to rest on the preceding evening disinclined them from any engagement; even the Italian Opera was given up, and they all lounged round the tea-table in the library, lazily engaged in discussing the brilliant effect of the last night's entertainment, and the style of that to be given to the Prince on the following Wednesday, particularly as to the hours after dinner; when it was hoped the *prima donna* of the season would vouchsafe, for the consideration of some thousand francs, to favour them with a little of her precious breath.

“Ah! *c'est ça!*” exclaimed Madame de Hautrivage, upon hearing Mr. Hargrave propose this exquisite *finale* for the day. “*Il*

faut avouer que mon beau frère s'y connaît ;” and then, after a few moments of more silent reflection than she often gave to any subject, she addressed herself to the two girls, and very gravely inquired what dresses they intended to wear.

They both laughed at this extraordinary anxiety for their beautification, but declared that they had not as yet taken the subject into consideration, and that they did not imagine the choice of their dresses on the occasion would be a matter of any very great importance.

“ I beg your pardon, there, my dear children,” said Mr. Hargrave. “ Madame de Hautrivage is perfectly right. It really is a matter of importance. It is precisely one of those circumstances in which the greatest tact is required. To be too plainly dressed would be disrespectful, and in every way to be avoided. Yet a costume in any degree approaching full dress would, if possible, be worse still ; because it would be most decidedly *mauvais ton*. However, I have no fears but that all this will

be perfectly well arranged. You have, both of you, my dear children, very excellent taste in dress; and the reputation of Madame de Hautrivage on this point is established upon the basis of universal applause. It therefore must appear superfluous for me to give an opinion on the subject, nevertheless——” Here Mr. Hargrave stopped, and looked round upon the three ladies with a sort of timid smile, as if fearful of giving offence by too rashly interfering on a subject of so much delicacy.

“Oh! do go on, papa,” cried Adèle, eagerly. “I would rather consult you upon this point than all the *marchandes de modes* in Paris. You have the most perfect taste of any person I have ever known. Do tell us what it was you were going to say when you so very cruelly stopped short.”

“You are most flatteringly kind, my dear Adèle,” returned Mr. Hargrave, laughing, as if in jest, yet at the same time very evidently wishing to accept the office offered to him. “And if Sabina is equally condescending, I

would take advantage of it by indulging my fancy for you both. You, Adèle, with your fine dark eyes, rich chestnut tresses, and your ‘nut-brown’ skin, I would dress, very literally, *couleur de rose*. But the robe must be of no ordinary quality, observe. I should wish to see you in the very richest satin you could purchase, made perfectly plain, and with no ornament whatever, except earrings, brooch, and bracelets of pearls; no flowers in the hair, no garniture, no finery of any sort.”

“*Si fait!*” exclaimed Adèle, gaily clapping her hands. “In this manner will I be dressed, and in no other. I went dress-buying with Madame de St. Aubin the other day; and in a *magazin* to which she took me I saw the exact thing papa describes—pale as the eglantine—rich as the state robe of Madame de Pompadour. The fate of my toilet for that day is fixed beyond appeal. And now for Sabina?”

“For Sabina,” said Mr. Hargrave, proudly turning his admiring looks upon his daughter, —“for Sabina I would have something that

should almost make her look like a young queen, by its costly, yet simple richness. The delicacy of her complexion, the lightness of her figure, and the peculiar youthfulness of her general appearance, pretty as I confess it to be, might be in danger of sinking into insignificance in the plainness of a dinner-dress, unless it were redeemed by its intrinsic elegance and splendour. Sabina must be in rich white silk, brocaded with small satin flowers—all white, of course. Her little feet must be in black silk, her hair must be braided with pearls (the young lady's casket, any more than your own, Adèle, is not poor in that article), and her brooch, bracelets, and earrings, must be *en suite*. *Vouée au blanc*, excepting the black shoes, she must not permit any mixture of colour to approach her; unless, perhaps—but of this I am not quite certain—she should place in her bosom a sprig of myrtle in full blossom."

Mr. Hargrave uttered these oracular words with his eyes half closed, as if by shutting out external objects he could render more perfect

the image that his fancy was sketching within. When he had finished, he looked round upon the three ladies with an air, half-serious, half-jesting, and as if ready to fall into either vein, according as they might seem disposed. Nevertheless, it was not very difficult to perceive that in all he said he was quite in earnest, and really desirous that the suggestions thus lightly thrown out should be acted upon.

“Exquisite!” exclaimed Madame de Hautravage: “*Et puis moi?*”

“For you, dear lady, I can only say,” replied Mr. Hargrave, gallantly bowing to her, “that I would wish you to adorn yourself on this occasion with the same admirable taste and propriety which you invariably display on all others.”

“The dress you have imagined for Sabina, papa, will be very becoming to her,” said Adèle; adding, after a short pause, “But will she not look almost like a bride if she is to be so entirely in white? Change but the myrtle for an orange-flower, and she would be perfectly ready for the altar.”

A smile, which he seemed disposed to conceal by turning aside his head, passed over the countenance of Mr. Hargrave, but he immediately resumed his gravity, and replied,—

“Changing the myrtle for the orange, Adèle, would indeed make all the difference; but that all is much. Well then! will you be good girls, and do exactly as I bid you?”

“To be sure we will!” was the joint and separate answer of both. “We must start upon our shopping the moment breakfast is over to-morrow morning,” said Adèle; “for truly we shall not give our dressmaker too much time. But there is one preliminary that you must perform, papa, if it so please you. We are going to a *marchand* who knows us not, and I shall therefore choose to pay for what I order. We have been so gay and so busy that I have never found time to ask you for our usual settlement of the last quarter’s account, and I am absolutely *sans sous*. Will you recruit my empty purse?”

“Will I, dearest?” said Mr. Hargrave,

rising with great alacrity. "Yes I will; though you are a naughty child for not reminding me of this before."

Being quite *en famille*, the party were sitting in the library; and in order immediately to comply with his step-daughter's request, Mr. Hargrave opened a Bramah-locked drawer in his elegant library-table, which, with many other costly articles of furniture, had been imported from his native London, and taking out a handful of gold coin, locked the drawer again; and returning to the table at which the ladies were sitting, threw the glittering treasure before the two girls, saying—"There, *mes belles*! Divide them between you. Only tell me, when you have counted them, how many fall to the share of Adèle, that I may enter it on her account. Every farthing of your income which you do not receive, my love, goes, as you know, into the funds, and increases your snug little fortune. So do not be too extravagant."

"Nay, papa, I am not in the least inclined

to be economical just now—especially when I see such a splendid heap of gold before me!”

“Is it not magnificent, Adèle, to have money paid us in this style?” demanded Sabina, with childish glee. “Where in the world, papa, did you get all these beautiful sovereigns?” she added, beginning busily to employ herself by dividing the pieces into two equal portions.

But Adèle, who seemed inclined to resign the finance department to her sister, happened to have her eyes fixed on her step-father as this question was asked, and was surprised by seeing him bite his under lip, and contract his brows into a frown, which it was very rare to see upon his usually bland and smiling countenance. But the painful feeling, whether of body or mind, passed away in an instant, and he replied,—

“Where did I get this gold, Sabina? From that fertile source of all good things, the banking establishment of Messrs. Lafitte and

Co. Is it enough for you both? If not, say the word, and I will produce as much more; and that, I think, will about empty my hoards of your admired metal for the present."

Adèle was startled by hearing him say this: for when he had left his place to seek the money, her eyes accidentally followed him, and she was so placed as to perceive that the small drawer he opened was full of gold pieces, so full, indeed, as to make her more than share the wonder afterwards expressed by Sabina at the sight of a small portion of them. The assertion, therefore, that another such handful as he had laid on the table would "empty his hoard," was unintelligible. She sought not, however, any explanation from his countenance; a very painful feeling caused her, on the contrary, to look away from him, and to fix her eyes upon a book that lay before her; and while her father, her aunt, and Sabina, continued in a light and lively strain to discuss the various particulars of the flattering visit they were about to receive, she sat in deep abstraction, pondering the circumstance

which had just occurred, and vainly searching for any possible interpretation of it which might satisfy her.

That her step-father had uttered a decided falsehood was certain. But his reason for doing it appeared so perfectly inscrutable, that she harassed herself in vain to find any plausible explanation of it. That he should wish to deceive herself or Sabina upon such a subject, or indeed upon any other, seemed impossible. It might—it must be her aunt, from whom, for some mysterious reason or other, he wished to conceal the fact that he had in the house a large sum in gold. Was it not within the reach of probability that he might think the good lady likely to wish for a portion of it, by way of a loan for her card-purse, when, perhaps, he had obtained it for some similar purpose for himself? But why not wait for her demand, and refuse it when it was made, in any manner which he might think best? Why volunteer an untruth for any purpose? Why so wantonly have recourse to it upon an occasion so very insignificant?

But Adèle was weary of conjectures long before she could end them. It was of no use that she told herself again and again, that, let the cause be what it would, it *could* not be a matter of any consequence; but, of consequence or not, her restive thoughts would turn to the subject, nor did it leave her in peace till she fell asleep. Long before that time, however, she had become perfectly convinced that her excellent stepfather was blameless, that he was right, and must have been right in doing what he had done, and that she alone was to blame for the pertinacious weakness with which she permitted her thoughts to fix themselves on the subject.

In this frame of mind she would have deemed it a sin had she mentioned to Sabina the subject which had thus worried her. "It is quite enough," thought she, "that I should virtually insult the kindest of men by dwelling so absurdly upon a word, which after all, perhaps, I misunderstood. It certainly is not necessary that I should give his acts and words into the

hands of his daughter, in order that they may undergo the same undutiful process." And accordingly they parted for the night with much less of perfect sympathy than usual. For Sabina's head was running upon snow-white robes, anticipated good looks, and a multitude of other agreeable thoughts, which made her totally unobservant of the heavy, absent look of her sister — or, if she saw it at all, it was only with the conviction that the late hours of the night before had made her sleepy.

In some degree, perhaps, this conjecture was correct, for it was late before the bright April sun awoke Adèle; and when it did, though it was not long before the prevailing thought of the preceding night recurred to her, it came less painfully. Sunshine and morning air are the finest specifics in the world against moody musings; and before the gay breakfast was over, and the three ladies decided as to what shop they should first honour with their presence, the golden treasure of the drawer

had very nearly melted into thin air, and Adèle, like her companion, began thinking about rich fabrics and becoming forms.

Beautiful young ladies are, generally speaking, considerably less difficult in the choice of their suits than ladies less young and less beautiful. Adèle and Sabina found, in what Madame de Hautrivage thought a wonderfully hurried manner, the pink and the white so accurately described by Mr. Hargrave, and their purchases were immediately made. A large and beautiful assortment of "fancy goods," as they are technically termed, has, unquestionably, and beyond the power of honest denial, a decided tendency to occupy the female mind, and withdraw it, for a time at least, from mightier matters. And so it was with our beautiful Adèle; for, despite her interesting misunderstanding with the young Englishman,—nay, despite, too, the teasing, puzzling thoughts which had been so lately tormenting her, she was as much present to the rainbow show before her as her more light-hearted sister; and it was only when at

the same moment they both drew out their purses, in order to pay for their purchases, that the sight of the English gold so far brought them back as to make her slightly sigh as she looked at it.

“*Ah! . . . des sovereigns, mesdames?*” said the shop-keeper. “We can only allow twenty-five francs, ladies; for the trouble of changing them is fully worth the difference.”

“Very well,” said Adèle, laying down the necessary sum; “*ça ira.*”

“What could induce my brother to take cash in this troublesome coin?” said Madame de Hautrivage.

“National partiality, I suppose,” replied Sabina, laughing.

“National partiality!” inwardly repeated Adèle. “To be sure it is! He thought Madame would laugh at him if he confessed that he had taken so many sovereigns, which must be decidedly less convenient than the coin of the country. Dearest papa! It was only a sort of joke then after all!”

Perfectly satisfied by this interpretation,

Adèle's spirits rose in exact proportion to their former depression ; and the remainder of that morning's important business was performed with equally gay animation and enjoyment by them all-

CHAPTER IX.

WHETHER accident or skill most favoured Mr. Hargrave when he was particularly desirous of giving an entertainment, perfect in every point, it might be difficult to say ; but no person, fortunate enough to have made one at any party thus sedulously cared for by him, could possibly deny that his success upon all such occasions was ever brilliant and ever unfailing.

On the day when he had the honour of receiving Prince Frederic of ***** to dine with him, Aladdin's lamp could hardly have furnished a more perfect entertainment. That it was in one respect a failure in the opinion of poor Adèle cannot, however, be denied ; for Alfred Coventry was not of it. But as the

repeated inquiries made at his hôtel always received for answer that he was not returned to Paris, the sorrow occasioned by his absence had no admixture of despair in it; for even Adèle herself never doubted that she should see him again in a few days; and in this hope she shook off, as far as might be, the feeling of disappointment which his absence occasioned her, and very amiably exerted herself to the utmost to enliven the conversation of the small circle permitted to share the honour of the royal guest's companionship.

The Duc de Vermont and his beautiful Duchesse were the only strangers admitted, making a party of but seven persons round a table glittering with gold and crystal, blazing with lights, and fragrant with successive viands of the most exquisite *recherche* and variety. But the table was a round one; and though large enough, perhaps, to accommodate a dozen, lent itself gracefully to the less crowded occupation of the select few who now surrounded it. Adèle thought that if Coventry had been there, the party would have been

perfect, and every one else thought it perfect as it was. The Prince, though still a very young man, had already become weary of the stately entertainments to which alone, in the common course of things, it was his destiny to be invited, and enjoyed exceedingly the contrast which this delicious little banquet afforded. Though he certainly admired the delicate Sabina beyond all the other beauties of the Parisian paradise, he was far from being insensible to the sparkling loveliness of Mademoiselle de Cordillac, or to the gorgeous, sultana-like attraction of the graceful Duchess. Neither was he at all incapable of appreciating the conversational ability and perfect tact of Mr. Hargrave, the truly French vivacity of the Duke, or the rare and exquisite quality of the wines which inspired it. In short, and to express the whole result in one single emphatic word, the Prince was pleased.

And, in truth, however strong might be the internal emotions of thankfulness and joy which swelled the bosom of Mr. Hargrave at perceiving this, there was nothing very sur-

prising in it ; for there really were abundant elements for the pleasant passing away of an hour or two, unless the royal young man had had within himself some antidote to social enjoyment, which most assuredly was not the case. And then, every body else was so evidently delighted when they looked at and listened to him, that nothing short of a most vilely churlish temper could have prevented his testifying some amiable feelings in return ; and as all that could be wished for in this way sparkled in his eyes, smiled on his lips and dropped in words of polished courtesy or playful ease from his tongue, it cannot be wondered at if all the little circle were delighted as well as the accomplished host.

Many royal personages seem to have discovered that music is one of the few enjoyments bestowed upon human beings by all-bounteous Heaven, which comes to them unvitiated by the pomps and vanities of their illustrious position ; and they often appear to value it accordingly. Prince Frederic was one of these ; and it was well known to all the world,

who knew any thing, that there was no gratification which seemed to give his Royal Highness such unequivocal delight as listening to the inspired harmonies of the best composers, who breathed upon his ear by that choicest of musical instruments, the human voice divine—provided that the organ thus employed in his service was not a French organ; for the *criand* tone of which he had conceived an abhorrence, that alone, of all the feelings of which he appeared susceptible, shewed itself strong enough to conquer the habitual restraint of politeness, for since his arrival in Paris he had never been known to sit out the vocal performance of any native.

Fortunately, neither Adèle nor Sabina were musical exhibitionists, though the latter was no bad performer; and the family vanity, therefore, was in no degree wounded by its having been decided in the Committee for Ways and Means to furnish amusement for this royal visit (which had sat for the despatch of business as soon as the invitation was accepted), that Grisi, Lablache, and Tamburini,

were to be put in requisition for the occasion, instead of having recourse to Parisian talent, either public or domestic.

The *café*, *chasse café*, albums, annuals, and miniatures had each and all done the duties required of them towards speeding the flight of time for the first hour after dinner; the light and laughing tone, engendered by good-humour and champagne, was just fading into something less animated, and Mr. Hargrave had cast one single anxious glance towards the alabaster time-piece, when the outer door of the suite was thrown open and the above-mentioned constellation announced.

“Possible!” exclaimed the Prince, with a countenance expressive of the most unequivocal satisfaction, adding in a half whisper to Sabina, beside whom he was seated, “There is no one in Paris, mademoiselle, who understands how to arrange an entertainment like *monsieur votre père*.”

Sabina had never before conversed with Prince Frederic otherwise than by that safe and ordinary mode to which young ladies

should always confine themselves, unless they wish to express more than they choose to say ; but at that moment such a feeling of gratitude and delight seized upon Sabina, that her eyes spoke her thanks much more eloquently than any words could have done, and so sweetly, innocently beautiful, did she look the while, that the poor Prince felt for the first time that there was danger near him. He behaved incomparably well, however : for though he vehemently longed to say to her, “ You are the very loveliest creature that ever Nature made ! ” he did no such thing ; but smuggling away a sigh under the disguise of a short cough, resolutely left his place, and advanced to offer his princely homage to the harmonious triumvirate.

Who is there that has not felt, on one side the Channel or the other, the ineffable enchantment which these three Italian magicians have the power of throwing over the senses ? So few, that it can be scarcely necessary to observe that Mr. Hargrave could not possibly have hit upon any expedient so likely to de-

tach the thoughts of the Prince from his daughter, as well as from every thing else in the world, as by setting them to sing at him, for three hours together, with little interruption beyond what proceeded from the entry of ices, and such little interludes of conversation with the performers themselves as the gracious Prince deemed necessary, in order that they might be made aware of the exquisite pleasure they were bestowing, and thus become sharers in it themselves.

The anxious host watched the operation of his costly entertainment from beginning to end with the most acute and undeviating attention, and there were moments in the course of it during which he *almost* lamented the having had recourse to any other enchantment than that of his lovely Sabina, who certainly did appear to him, and perhaps really was, more touchingly beautiful on that evening than he had ever seen her before. In fact, she had never before enjoyed any hours so completely. Her love of music was as strong as that of the

Prince himself, and perhaps even more fastidious. She always declared her own performance too bad to endure, though in fact it was better by many degrees than that of ninety-nine out of a hundred of the amateur pretenders to the divine science. But what with her *exigeante* delicacy of ear, and a temperament leading her greatly to prefer ease to labour, the luxury enjoyed at the Italian Opera was so greatly beyond any she could procure for herself, that she rarely played at all, excepting when quite alone; and then it was rather with the capricious uncertainty of the Æolian harp, which sends forth its sweet sounds in voluptuous wantonness, than with the studious laboriousness of science. Had she been brought up a very poor, instead of a very rich girl, it would have been otherwise; for rather than not have had good music at all, there can be no doubt that she would have contrived to obtain it for herself. But it was quite sufficient for her to have her own corner in her own box at the Italian Opera, and there

it was her wont to lose herself in sweet unconscious reverie, her senses "lapped in Elysium," and her shapeless, unsettled thoughts careering away vastly beyond the reach of common sense, but generally into regions of poetry, peopled with beatific visions, all exceedingly unlike the full-dressed realities around her. All this had happened to her often, and had decidedly furnished the greatest enjoyment of her young life; but the magic witchery of scenic representation, with all its adventitious aids of orchestra and so forth, had always, in some degree, divided her attention, or at any rate left her with the persuasion that her enjoyment was produced by the united charm of all she saw and all she heard. But now, when Grisi first raised her voice, almost unaccompanied, and ran up to the very top of her compass, and then sunk into the plaintive sweetness of a nightingale that serenades the moon, she could hardly help exclaiming

"Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?"

and remembering the sort of dreary delight

this same voice had so often given her before,
when it had

“Lulled the sense,
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;”

to add (which she might have done in very
sober truth) that

“Such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
She had never felt till now.”

It was easy enough to perceive that, of all the little party thus exquisitely regaled, there was but one beside herself who felt it as she did; and it is vain to deny that, as she observed this, she felt that there was pleasure—great pleasure, in listening to music with any body who loved it as well as one did oneself.

The last trio had been asked for by the Prince, and performed as if the three wondrous voices had not sounded a single note before; and then the professors retired, leaving the hero of the *fête* with a feeling of having tasted more perfect enjoyment than any entertainment had afforded him since his arrival in Paris. He, too, rose to take leave, and ex-

tending his hand to Mr. Hargrave, thanked him for the pleasure he had afforded him with a degree of sincerity which rarely accompanies similar words.

“Your Royal Highness makes me too happy,” returned the delighted host, with truth equally rare; “but let me beseech your Royal Highness not to leave my humble roof without partaking of the refreshment prepared in the little *salon* there. It is impossible, I believe, to listen to the music with the enthusiasm which you, *mon prince*, appear to feel, without experiencing somewhat of fatigue and exhaustion. Will your Royal Highness permit us to follow you to the next room?”

By no means displeased with the proposition, Prince Frederic nodded a smiling assent, and immediately offered his arm to Sabina. Was it because he remembered that she was the daughter of his host, and that her eldest sister was not? Or was it because the temptation was too strong to be resisted, and that he really could not help it?

Mr. Hargrave was perfectly right. Fatigue and a feeling of exhaustion are inevitable upon

attending to any thing earnestly for three hours. It was half-past one o'clock, and the supper was the very perfection of a French supper—which means, that though as light in appearance and as tastefully ornamented as a banquet on the stage, it had, nevertheless, such a portion of real comestibles amongst its prettiness as courageous people venture to address themselves to when they are hungry, let the hour be what it may. It is exactly for such a repast as this that champagne seems invented, and such champagne as Mr. Hargrave's the Duc de Vermont declared must have been made on purpose for the beautiful lips now invited to sip it. On himself its effect was exactly what his watchful entertainer would have desired. His gay spirits mounted and effervesced as brightly as the sparkling beverage he quaffed, occupying and delighting every one, save only Prince Frederic of ***** and the fair young creature at his side.

With what feelings Mr. Hargrave watched this exception to the laughing hilarity of the little party could be guessed by none unacquainted with the inmost secrets of his soul ;

and as for the repository of these secrets, he had never chosen any confidant: save himself alone, none could guess the ecstasy of that hour. Sabina, too, now shewed for the first time that as she listened to the Prince the distance of rank was forgotten and nothing remembered but himself. Had the delight which the observing this occasioned to her father been caused by believing that the union, which he now fancied was within his grasp, would lead to her happiness as much as to his own, much might have been forgiven him. But it was not so. He saw in it nothing but an additional charm whereby to work upon the passions of the youthful Prince, and watched it with no better feeling than that with which a spider may be supposed to watch the subtle complexity of the web that is twisting itself about the unwary insect who has approached it. Hargrave felt sympathy with no human being but himself—not even with his lovely and most loving child, and deserved not that any should feel sympathy with him.

At length the evening closed, and the guests

departed, no two of the small company feeling in the least degree alike on the subject of the entertainment they had shared. Madame de Hautrivage was simply *abîmée* with fatigue, and yawned till her jaws were very nearly dislocated as soon as the royal and noble guests were beyond the reach of seeing or hearing her. The Duc de Vermont,—who, since the Prince had ceased to listen to the *feu de joie* of witty words with which he had enlivened the meeting, had devoted himself to Adèle,—had nearly yawned too, as he perceived how entirely *la belle demoiselle*, who he feared was *tant soit peu Agnes*, was thinking of something else. The beautiful Duchess roused her husband from his sleepy fit as they drove home by her exclamations of envy and astonishment at the enormous wealth of the English. “*Mais qu’ils sont bête,*” she added, “*après tout.* What Frenchman would have given an entertainment that must have cost at least three thousand francs, and then set down four women and three men to partake of it? *Quelle bévée ridicule!*” Adèle was indeed so unmindful of

all that was going on, that she would have been greatly puzzled to give any account of the day when it was over. Sabina—the pure-minded, innocent Sabina — had been so very, very happy, that all criticism upon the winged hours, and all judgment upon any thing that had passed in the course of them, were swallowed up in a general conviction that her dear papa was the most delightful man in the world for knowing, as the Prince said, so much better than any body else how to arrange a delightful party!

And the Prince himself—the hero of this deeply-studied *fête* — what did he think of it? His only objection to it was, that he was conscious of having found it too agreeable. “There is danger in such hours,” thought he, as he turned restlessly on his pillow. “That delicate angel is too good, too fair, too fascinating, to approach with impunity. We must have no more small dinner-parties at Monsieur Hargrave’s!”

CHAPTER X.

ADÈLE DE CORDILLAC had endured with more than ordinary philosophy the deep disappointment occasioned by the absence of Alfred Coventry at the dinner which has been just described ; but not all her resolution could prevent her sister's perceiving, when they met the following morning, that she looked both ill and unhappy.

At no time would Sabina have been unobservant of this, for no attachment could be more perfect or more tender than that by which the half-sisters were united : but now the feeling produced by it was peculiarly strong ; for, in the first place, Sabina herself had never in her life felt so happy as she did

that morning. The two girls seemed to have changed characters, like the Olivia and Sophia of Goldsmith, and the gaiety of Adèle to have passed into the heart of Sabina, while in return she had received the gentle meekness of her less animated sister.

“What ails you, dearest?” said the younger, kneeling upon the cushion at her sister’s feet, caressingly taking both her hands, and raising her beautiful blue eyes to her face with an expression half playful, half tender. “I will not have you look so woe-begone! I thought that such a day as yesterday must do you good, and almost make you forget the absence of Coventry. Was not the day delightful, Adèle?”

“Not to me, dear love,” replied Adèle, gravely, and with a movement of her head that seemed to indicate many disparaging thoughts concerning it.

“What can you mean, Adèle?” said Sabina, starting up, her delicate colour heightened, at the very least, to the third shade of a moss-rose that goes on blushing *crescendo* to the centre.

“ Dear child !” returned Adèle, mournfully, “ I am in no fit state to lecture you—for truly I feel that I well deserve lecturing myself ; but if you will have the truth, I must tell you that in my well-intentioned efforts to forget the absent, I looked on with more than usual attention on what was present, and ——” But here she stopped.

“ And what, Adèle ?” demanded Sabina, her complexion assimilating nearer and nearer to the centre of the rose.

“ I fear you will be very angry with me ! Yet you would not, could you understand me fully, for then you would see that I hold you blameless as an angel,” said Adèle, colouring in her turn. “ But I do think, Sabina, that Prince Frederic is very nearly, if not quite, in love with you.”

“ That is not like you, sister Adèle,” said Sabina, sitting down with a look of deep vexation. “ I know not what you have seen in Prince Frederic of ***** which can justify your making such an observation. We need not tell each other — you and I, I

mean,—that love from him to me must be an insult. And what has he ever said or done to deserve such a suspicion?”

“Nothing, Sabina, nothing!—that is, there is nothing to deserve the suspicion that he would offer you an insult; which, as you most truly say, any mention of love from him to you must be. But there is much to make me fear, rather for his sake than for yours, Sabina, that he admires you more and more every time you meet; and that it is terribly likely, without any act of the will, that it may end by his becoming most devotedly and unhappily attached to you.”

“And pray, sister, do you think I am likely to become most devotedly and painfully attached to him?”

“No, dearest Sabina, I do not. With so excellent an understanding as yours, and principles of the quality which I know yours to be, there can be no cause for such fear. But this young Prince——”

“Forgive me, Adèle, for interrupting you,” replied Sabina, with vivacity; “but you must

permit me to say that this young Prince, as you call him, has never, for a single instant, given us any right to suspect that his principles are of worse quality than our own; or that his prunedom, or his youth either, need be pleaded in extenuation of any thing he has ever done or said. Let none of your fears, therefore, be directed towards him, Adèle. As for myself, I will not sit in judgment on the wisdom of having felt all the admiration for him of which I was conscious yesterday; but, believe me, there is no danger of my forgetting that

‘It were all one
That I should love a bright particular star,
And think to wed it; he is so above me.’

I know all this, dear sister, as well as you could possibly wish me to know it,—and let that suffice you.”

“It shall—it shall, dearest: but do not turn away as if you were vexed with me, Sabina. I am very ready to believe that the uneasy fancies which have been floating about my

silly head have no wiser origin than my own low spirits. Sabina, I am very miserable."

"My dearest Adèle! and I have been cross to you!" returned the penitent Sabina. "Oh, forgive me; and yesterday, then, while I was gayer and happier than I ever remember to have felt before, you were pining for the absence of Alfred Coventry."

"Less for his absence," replied Adèle, bursting into tears, "than for the cause of it. I cannot forgive myself," she continued, "for having listened to any thing such a person as my aunt could say, in preference to trusting to what I myself know of his character. He would not have so treated me, Sabina: and when I recall his manner to me on the fatal night of that detestable ball, and the number of times I insultingly evaded his earnest—oh! so evidently earnest wish to speak to me, I lose all confidence in the hope of his return, and feel irresistibly persuaded that he has left Paris to return to it no more. Am I not punished for my contemptible jealousy and pride?"

“What makes you think that he would take so very strong a measure?” demanded Sabina. “Surely, if he believed that you had blamed or suspected him unjustly, his best method of proving this would not be the flying off from Paris, post haste, in this way?”

“No, no, it is not that; I gave him not the slightest clue by which to discover the senseless jest which had been played upon us. What he must believe, Sabina, is that I am the most heartless coquette that ever France produced. Every hour that I spend in recalling all that has passed between us makes me feel more strongly the odious light in which I must appear to him. No one can judge of this so well as I can do, Sabina; and indeed—indeed, I think that his only course was to turn away from me for ever,—and that he has done so I can doubt no longer.”¹

“My dear Adèle, I cannot but think such a persuasion is premature: at any rate before we receive it, let us send to his hôtel to know whether his return is still expected there; whether he has left servants, horses, or carriages

behind him ; and, in short, find out,—as most certainly it must be very easy to do,—whether he has finally taken his departure or not.”

“Sabina, I would give my right hand to do it!” returned Adèle. “But the means, dearest? I cannot ask papa to despatch a servant with such strangely curious inquiries, and still less can I do it myself!”

“What say you, Adèle, to our sending old Roger, confidentially, upon this expedition? Is there any thing within the reach of possibility, think you, that the dear old man would refuse to do for us?”

“But even to old Roger I shall feel ashamed to betray the deep interest I feel in this message; yet, unless I do so, what chance is there that he will execute it effectually?”

“None whatever,” replied Sabina, laughing. “If Roger fancies that he is sent trotting to the Rue di Rivoli upon any business that an ordinary domestic could execute, the embassy will be very unprofitably performed, depend upon it. You know perfectly well that the act of traversing one of your magni-

ficent bridges appears to him an enterprise only second to setting off for Pekin. Therefore be assured, that without a motive proportionably strong, he will set about it very reluctantly, and perform it vilely; but only just let him suspect that he could render you an important service, Adèle, and one, too, with which none other of the household could be trusted, and the only difficulty remaining will be to make his venerable body keep pace with his eager soul."

"You plead eloquently, my sister, and most convincingly," replied Mademoiselle de Cordillac. "But must I then," she continued, "shew forth all the secrets of my heart to the worthy Roger, and tell him in good set terms that I am very heartily in love, and am in need of his good services to bring my wandering lover back again?"

"Upon my word, my dear, I fear you must, or we shall make nothing of him. You cannot fear his breathing a single syllable of any thing you say to him in confidence? I am convinced that he would

consent to be torn to atoms rather than suffer any human being to share the trust so confided in him."

"I know it,—I know it, Sabina! No, I have no fears of dear old Roger. Only it is rather disagreeable to send any page on such a mission. But it shall be done, my dear, bold counsellor. I have paid enough for my pride's sake, and now I will make the offending rebel smart a little."

So saying, Adèle de Cordillac deliberately rose and rang the bell. "Send Roger to me," she said to the servant who answered it: and the old man stood before her, smiling, and well pleased to be summoned to her presence, considerably before she had determined how to explain her singular mission to him.

"This is a glory and a pleasure to me, ladies," said the delighted old man. "God bless your sweet young faces! Is there any thing to be done in which I can be useful?"

"Indeed there is, Roger," replied Adèle, taking courage, and determined that her embassy should not fail from her averseness to

explaining it. "We know that we can trust you, Roger, with any secret, and what I am going to say to you now must be for ever kept from all others."

"Miss Adèle," replied the old man, earnestly, "the only great pleasure that I think God could now give me in this world would be finding out that I had the power of doing either my beloved master or your dear young sister some real service; except, indeed, the seeing that you are not afraid to trust me."

"God bless you, old friend," returned Adèle, affectionately; "you shall judge then if I am afraid to trust you."

She then explained to him at some length, and with perfect clearness, the *mauvais tour* which Madame de Hautrivage had played her, and all the painful consequences which ensued from it; adding, "But for this, my good old friend, I do in troth believe that I should now have been affianced to this gentleman. Go, then, good Roger, and discover for me if Mr. Coventry is expected to return, or

whether the people of the hôtel believe that he has left Paris altogether."

It was quite evident that the honest man perfectly understood his commission, and no less so that, if his zeal in the cause could avail, it would not have been given to him in vain.

While this important business was transacted in the boudoir of the young ladies, affairs of at least equal moment were going forward in Mr. Hargrave's library. He had retired thither immediately after breakfast, chiefly with the intention, perhaps, of quietly enjoying in review the honours and success of the previous day. Never before had he felt so delightfully assured that all he wished was near. He had often, as he smilingly told himself, observed unequivocal admiration and the most marked attention on the part of Prince Frederic to his daughter, but never till the last night had any expression of positive tenderness beamed from his royal eyes as he gazed upon her. His beautiful daughter, too,—that sweet epitome of his own grace and

elegance,—could she have kindled as she did, while listening to the low-toned conversation poured into her willing ear, had no mixture of wooing sweetness lurked in it? Triumphant was the answer that his very soul received as he asked himself this question; and his reverie changed from contemplation of the past to the most intoxicating anticipations for the future. He seemed to feel upon his heaving breast the delicious weight of stars and crosses of orders innumerable. Sweet sounds murmured in his ears as of whispering throngs of nobles, whose words, being interpreted, were “See! that graceful, noble gentleman is the father of the Princess Frederic!” Long suites of gorgeous rooms opened in a palpable vista before him, and among them his heart told him he should find his home. “Ay,” he murmured softly, stretching himself on the sofa, whereon he had thrown his “graceful length of limb,” in order to indulge these meditations,—“Ay, there will be my resting-place, and without the cursed—cursed necessity of seeking means to pay for it!—Oh,

blessed chance! Just at the very hour when all resources fail me—all!—just at that frightful hour to open upon a mine of glorious state and costless luxury, which shall wait upon me to the last hour of my existence, without a single racking thought, by day or night, as to how it is supplied!”

Exactly at the moment when Mr. Hargrave had reached this climax of hope, the knock of an intruder was heard at the library door. “Come in,” he said gently, and without greatly changing his position, for he doubted not that he should see, when the door opened, the lovely form of his daughter, which he had ever admired as being a softened copy of his own majestic beauty, but which he now felt ready to kneel before and worship, as the source of all the golden joys which he saw before him.

The revulsion of feeling produced by the disappointment which followed was really terrible. Instead of Adèle and Sabina, whom he expected to see enter, the slowly opening door admitted the form he most hated to be-

hold, namely, that of his house-steward, who had long been in the habit of receiving all his bills, and of very punctually paying them as long as his elegant master had punctually furnished him with means.

After the first shock, however, occasioned by the contrast between what he saw and what he expected to see, Mr. Hargrave recovered himself; for he did not at that moment anticipate any particularly pressing claims upon him. A few weeks before, indeed, this same unwelcome individual had painted with such hateful accuracy the inevitable consequence of continuing any longer the system of paying in promises instead of francs, that Hargrave's buoyant and bold spirit had almost sunk before it; but he had not only rallied, but by some way or other found means to satisfy, or stop, the claims which had very nearly overwhelmed him; and he now felt very tolerably secure that, for the present at least, his extravagant establishment might go on without any danger of immediate consequences, and shew forth, as he hoped,

the same brilliant surface of wealth to the public, till the marriage of Sabina should render it no longer necessary.

Scarcely, however, had the prospective father-in-law of a royal prince looked in the face of his steward, than his heart misgave him; for he saw symptoms there of the same gloom and anxiety which had been so recently removed by efforts to which Mr. Hargrave was well aware he could not, for many reasons, resort again.

“What is the matter now, Jenkyns?” exclaimed Mr. Hargrave, suddenly springing from the sofa: “you look as if every ounce of plate I have in the world had been stolen. For God’s sake explain the meaning of your doleful visage instantly!”

“It is easy enough to do that, sir,” replied the man, who had led a very easy life while the resources of his lavish master lasted, and was as little disposed as his principal to witness the end of so brilliant a career. “I only wish I was sure that it would be as easy to cure the mischief as to explain it.”

“What the devil do you mean, Jenkyns?” demanded his master, turning very pale; for thoughts of a possible danger shot through his brain, considerably more appalling than any which had gone before.

“The old story, sir,” replied the steward, knitting his brows, and shaking his head very significantly.

“Hoh!” exclaimed Hargrave with such a heavy “suspuration of forced breath” as seemed to denote a feeling of relief. “But you can surely skirmish with them a little longer, Jenkyns? I thought you told me that the money I have lately given you—in pretty tolerable abundance, God knows—would suffice to keep the people quiet, and ready to go on for some months to come?”

“And I answered for no more than was true, sir,” returned Jenkyns. “The tradespeople are all in high good-humour again, and I don’t expect we shall hear any more grumbling. Somehow or other they had taken fright, but your coming down, sir, so freely with ready money again has set all

that right, and I dare say we shall hear no more of their bills till towards the end of the season."

"Then why, in Heaven's name, my good fellow, do you look so confoundedly dismal?" said Mr. Hargrave, gaily turning on his heel, and looking in the mirror over the chimney for a more agreeable object than the puckered visage of the old steward.

"I am afraid, sir, you have forgot all about Monsieur Jules Marsan. You know, sir, that just before your good lady died, you borrowed a hundred and fifty thousand francs of him — at terrible high interest, to be sure — but it was but a trifle, and it could be of no great consequence in our large way of going on; and, therefore, when he came into my bureau this morning, looking as black as thunder, I went on sipping my tea, as easy as may be, thinking that the little matter of interest in arrear, which couldn't be above six or seven thousand francs, might easily be settled. However, I soon found out that we were not to be let off so easy; for that he was come to

insist upon having his principal back again forthwith, which he swears you promised to pay on demand any time after two years from the date of the loan; and that he wrote to remind you of this, and to give you notice that he wanted the money: to which letter he declares you have given no answer whatever. And this it is, I suspect, which has made him so savage; for he swears lustily that he will have the money in his pocket, or you in a gaol, before the week is out."

"I declare to you, by the honour of a gentleman, Mr. Jenkyns, that I have never seen any such letter," replied Mr. Hargrave, with great dignity; "and I desire that you will let him know this without loss of time; assuring him, likewise, that if he will only indulge me now with the same notice he intended to give when he wrote, his money shall be punctually paid him."

"And how long, I wonder, would that give for finding the money?" said the steward, giving a furtive glance at his handsome master, who had again turned to recruit his

spirits by looking at himself in his favourite mirror.

“A month, Jenkyns,” replied Mr. Hargrave; “and that will suit me perfectly well.”

“And, I dare say, that will suit him too,” replied the well-paid servant, taking his departure without giving any hint of having discovered how very lightly the honour of his elegant master had been pledged.

Unpleasant as this very urgent claim must have been at any other moment, it now only acted as a spur upon the already excited temper of Hargrave; and he immediately set to work to invent some new and reasonable excuse for again inviting the Prince to his house; satisfied that a very little more opportunity for fostering the passion he had conceived, was all that was required to bring on a declaration of it.

While thus engaged, he was again interrupted; but this time it was by nothing more annoying than his verbose sister-in-law. This accomplished Frenchwoman was in many ways extremely useful to him; and he received

her now, as he was always accustomed to do, with a most courteous welcome.

“*Ah, ça!*” she exclaimed: “I find you alone, my brother — that is well, for I have business to discuss with you.”

“*Eh, bien! ma sœur,*” returned the gentleman. “What is it?”

“*Mais* — you shall hear. I have been making a visit of consolation to Madame de Tours. You know her husband is just ordered to Africa. *Eh, bien!* she could not talk of that, she could talk of nothing but the diamonds of Madame Bertrand, the rich banker’s newly-married wife. Madame de Tours assures me positively that she has been taken at the Opera for the Infanta of Spain — by somebody, of course, who did not know the Infanta’s person — for they say that Madame Bertrand is an extremely pretty young woman, and that she is to be the beauty, *par excellence*, for the remainder of the season. All Paris is wild to see her and her diamonds. *On dit*, that she is absolutely covered with them from head to foot — literally from head to foot!

Imaginez !—nothing is so much the fashion as to invite her. *Et voilà mon affair.* I want our cards to be sent instantly, together with an invitation to a *fête*. You have always been the first in every thing, and I would not have you the last in this : *comprenez-vous, mon frère ?* ”

Mr. Hargrave assured her that nothing could at any time be so agreeable to him as complying with her wishes ; and that, *à propos* of the subject on which she had been so kind as to express them now, her feelings and opinions were precisely his own.

“ *A la bonne heure !* ” exclaimed the animated lady, springing from her chair with the playful grace of sixteen ; “ *vraiment, mon cher—mais, vraiment, vous êtes divin !—Allons donc.* When shall it be ? Do not fix a distant day, lest all the world shall have been before you.”

“ What say you, dear lady, to this day week ? ” said Mr. Hargrave.

“ Nothing can be better,” she replied. “ *Sans adieu, donc, I go to consult nos demoiselles on their dresses ;* ” and Madame de

Hautrivage, kissing the tips of her fingers, tripped away.

Here then was another opportunity for Prince Frederic! Having, as usual, made out a list of the company he wished to invite, for the use of the person whose office it was to send forth invitations, Mr. Hargrave himself addressed a note of homage to the Prince, in which he alluded, with graceful playfulness, to the Paris whim of hunting all novelties. Each family, he said, considered it a duty which they owed to society, to catch the short-lived wonder for a night, and, holding it in soft bondage, to exhibit it for the amusement of their friends and acquaintance. In performance of which modish rite he was going, he added, to request the *élite* of the *beau monde* to assemble in his drawing-rooms on the 19th, for the purpose of looking at a certain beautiful Madame Bertrand, who appeared at the present moment to be the centre of all attraction. Could his Royal Highness condescend to turn his eyes for an hour or two in the same direction as the multitude turned

theirs? If this might be hoped for! &c.
&c. &c.

“ When *honours* come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.”

Not only did Prince Frederic accept this invitation, and that, too, by a few gracious lines written by his own royal hand; but in his turn he invited Mr. Hargrave and the ladies of his family to favour him with their presence at a fancy-ball, for which he was about to send out invitations for the 1st of May.

This written document seemed to complete the process of Mr. Hargrave's infatuation. There was not a word in it but he turned and twisted till it became to his fancy a solemn assurance of all he wished; and, had every other line failed to furnish the desired interpretation, that in which his royal correspondent so clearly stated that no one else in all Paris was as yet invited to the projected *fête*, would have perfectly sufficed. This fancy-ball, then, was given for Sabina! Did she decline the invitation, it was clear as

light that the whole thing would fall to the ground. This princely entertainment was to afford the royal lover the opportunity of declaring his passion. It was no new device. Such arrangements had been often heard of before. When king's sons married from love, and not from policy, it was not likely they would lose the dear joy of witnessing the emotion their generous devotion must cause in the fair object of it,—it was not likely they would ceremoniously demand consent of friends, and so forth. “No!” murmured the thrice happy Hargrave; “I have not lived so long in the very centre and heart of society without learning to interpret the signs and tokens belonging to it. Sabina is the elected wife of a prince, and I am destined to stand in the position of brother to a king!—And poor Jenkyns thought to scare me by talking of a pressing claim for a few thousand pounds! What a whimsical incongruity it seems!” And Mr. Hargrave laughed—laughed heartily at the jest he saw in it; and then sat down again at his elegant *écritoire*, and composed an ac-

ceptance of Prince Frederic's invitation, with as much eloquence as it was possible to throw upon the subject.

That the unfortunate Hargrave, despite the *savoir vivre* on which he so greatly piqued himself, was most egregiously mistaken in all these calculations, is most certain; nevertheless, his daughter Sabina was in truth the origin and cause of Prince Frederic's fancy-ball: nor had she appeared at all less lovely in his eyes on the evening they had last passed together than her ambitious father supposed. But the result of his admiration, as well as the motive for his giving this *fête*, were as far as was well possible from what his inflated imagination conceived.

Prince Frederic, through many a bright gala, had danced and talked with the beautiful Sabina without a serious thought beyond what was necessary to decide his opinion that she was the loveliest blossom of the bright *parterre* which (by the help of exotics) a Parisian *salon* of the first class is sure to display. Many were the balls, concerts, and operas,

which had passed over them before he became in the least degree conscious of any change of sentiment towards her ; but, of late, he had begun to be a little aware that he liked better to talk than even to waltz with her. He felt that it was a pity to lose the expression of her marvellously sweet eyes when she looked timidly in his face as he spoke to her. He acknowledged to himself,—without, however, much thinking that it signified,—that Sabina Hargrave was not only the fairest girl in Paris, but, to the best of his knowledge and belief, the purest, gentlest, most intellectual lady in the world : and, soon after this, the thought struck him that it was a pity she was not of a royal house. But still he was in no way alarmed ; feeling convinced, as many a good man has done before him, that he was master of his will, if not of his wishes, and that, while he remained so, there could be no danger of any kind in the intercourse.

It was on the evening of Mr. Hargrave's dinner-party, that this noble-minded scion of

a royal stock first became aware of his own danger; and perhaps, also, that it was not impossible there might be danger for Sabina too.

It is "*de notoriété bourgeoise*" that, in the intercourse between gentlemen who are royal and ladies who are not so, the *perfectly* well-conducted of the fair sex, particularly if they are young and beautiful, take more especial care to be discreet in words and looks than on any other occasion; the consequence of which is, that these illustrious sons of kings rarely catch a beam of unquenched feeling from the eyes of the most charming, because the purest of human beings: and it was probably for this reason, that when Sabina, for an instant forgetting his rank, looked up in the face of Prince Frederic with unrestrained gratitude and delight, upon his paying a compliment to her father, it seemed to him that he had never before seen any thing so exquisitely beautiful as her countenance; and he might have exclaimed, like

the eighth Henry, though in a far different spirit,—

“ Oh, Beauty !

Till now I never knew thee.”

“ Oh ! how those eyes could speak !” thought the stricken young man, “ if one but dared to question them !” But, to his honour be it said, not once again in the whole course of that delightful evening,—not even during the gay hour of unreflecting enjoyment which followed the exhilarating supper, did Prince Frederic seek to fix the glance of that innocent eye upon his own, or attempt in any way to make her understand how deeply he was touched by her loveliness. Had he felt less, perhaps, he might have been less cautious to conceal that little than he now was to hide, to struggle with, and overcome, what he felt was strong enough to frighten him.

Before he left his apartments on the following morning his resolution was taken, and his plans perfectly settled and arranged.

He wrote to a noble friend in London, announcing his intention of immediately prosecuting his scheme of travel by proceeding to that capital, and requesting him to bespeak suitable apartments, to be ready for him in a fortnight. He then summoned the principal *employé* of his suite, gave him notice of his intended change of residence, and informed him, likewise, that it was his purpose, before he left Paris, to give an entertainment on a scale suitable to his rank, the preparations for which he desired might be set about without delay.

CHAPTER XI.

To Adèle, the absence of old Roger seemed interminable; and even Sabina, though she was thinking a little of other things, confessed that she could not guess what he could possibly be about so long. At last, however, like other tedious things, his absence ended; and just as Adèle was proposing that they should tell their father how very long he had been out, and request that some active measures might be resorted to for discovering what was become of him, the old man made his appearance, a little out of breath, he said, by the activity he had used, but, in all other respects, in a state of the highest preservation and safety.

“And your news, Roger?” said Sabina, perceiving that Adèle appeared more desirous of hearing than of asking for it.

“Not over good, my dear children,—not over good,” he replied, shaking his head.

Adèle turned very pale, but spoke not a word.

“Speak out and tell all,” said Sabina; “but do not keep us in suspense.”

The privileged old man looked earnestly in the half-averted face of poor Adèle, and replied,—

“Not for the world, my dears; but it is rather a long story, if I am to tell you all of it.”

“Sit down, old friend,” said Sabina, placing a chair for him; “and fear not that we shall think the history too long; for, trust me, we would not have you omit a word of it.”

Adèle gave her young sister a very grateful look, and prepared to listen.

“In the first place,” resumed Roger, “and to give the result of my commission before

I go on to any thing else, I must tell you, ladies, that the young gentleman is not in Paris, nor has been, since he left it the day after our last great ball."

"There is no bad news in that, Adèle," observed Sabina, cheerfully. Adèle nodded in acquiescence of the remark, and changed her position, so as to see the countenance of her faithful messenger.

"No, that is all very well, my dears, but the worst is to come." And then, bestowing a good deal more tediousness than was absolutely necessary, Roger Humphries proceeded to relate, that upon asking for Mr. Coventry's people at the hôtel, a very decent servant-like body, and altogether an Englishman, came to him, and told him not only what he had just repeated, but also that his master was expected to return in a few days, but probably for a few hours only, as he had sent orders for every thing he had left at the hôtel to be packed up in readiness to start as soon as he came back. "Now this I should have been sorry for," said the

worthy Roger, “ even if he had said no more ; because it was plain enough to me, that you had rather he was not going away quite so soon, my dears. But it was what he said after that made me think the news so very bad ; for he spoke of him, to be sure, as if he was altogether out of the common way of ordinary young gentlemen nowadays Such a son !—such a brother !—and such a fortune ! And so you see, my dear children, it could hardly help coming into my head that he would be just exactly the very husband for one of you two. Think what it would be, — I ask your pardon, Miss Adèle, — but just think what it would be if either of you was to marry a Frenchman ! It would be the death of me, — I am quite sure it would be the death of me. Not that I ought to mention such a reason as that, — for what’s my dying or living compared to your having husbands like ? Lord have mercy upon me ! I needn’t name names ; — and you, both of you, used as you are to such a gentleman as my master, — you would take to

hating him, ladies, in a month,—you would indeed. And, take my word for it, that's a very bad thing, and leads to mischief, as sure as can be. But it is little use to talk about this Mr. Coventry any more, I suppose; unless, indeed, you thought there would be any good in my stepping over again, just when he comes back, maybe, and giving him a hint that you would just like to say good-by to him before he goes. It takes a long while sometimes before young folks get to the end of saying good-by."

At length, to the great relief of Sabina, Roger concluded his harangue, and wiped his forehead.

"Thank you, Roger Humphries,—thank you kindly," she said. "Go now, old friend, and get some refreshment; you look heated and weary, Roger. Should we think you could help us further, we shall be sure to call for you."

The old man uttered his usual fervent "Bless you!—bless you both!" and departed; leaving both the poor girls discouraged and dis-

comforted, and pretty equally convinced that but little chance remained of ever seeing Alfred Coventry more.

It was now, and now only, that the unfortunate Adèle de Cordillac became aware of the misery which the absurdity of her *unvenerable* aunt had brought upon her; for it was now only that she was fully aware how wholly she had bestowed upon Coventry the affection of her heart. She spoke not, but she wept bitterly; and not the less so from the conviction that she had used him ill. The genuine worth and unmistakable nobleness of heart, which she had had sufficient opportunity of observing, ought, as she felt but too plainly, to have saved him from such hasty condemnation; and every sad moment of meditation on the past only brought with it the strengthened conviction that she had been loved, and was loved no longer.

In this state of mind it was fortunate for her that she had stolen away to her own room, that she might weep, unperceived even

by her gentle and sympathising sister, before Mr. Hargrave entered the boudoir, all radiant and glorious with the intelligence he brought of two more balls, of which Prince Frederic was to be the hero. Certain it is that his news was not listened to now by an indifferent ear; and it was with a delightful beating of the heart, which almost answered to her own, that her father witnessed the beautiful flush which mounted to her cheeks as he spoke. But much too wise to let her perceive he noticed it, he turned from her with an air of affected business and bustle, saying, — “Where is Adèle?—where is your sister, my dear child? I particularly wish that you should both of you prepare your toilets for these occasions with more than usual care. At the *fête* given by the Prince, my dear Sabina, this is especially necessary; as, you may depend upon it, every lady of any distinction in Paris will make a point of appearing in the most costly and elegant costume she can devise. It is a compliment which his Royal Highness well deserves from all, in

return for the gracious affability with which he has entered into the amusements of the society; and to us, in particular, his condescending kindness has been so remarkable that any omission on our parts would be unpardonable."

"It is you, papa, who must invent our fancy-dresses," said Sabina, rather desirous of turning the conversation from the Prince to a subject so absorbing as that of dresses for a fancy-ball. "I am quite sure," she added, "that neither Adèle nor I shall be able to do any thing without you."

"You shall not need, dearest," replied the happy Hargrave. "No man of taste would desire a more agreeable employment than draping two such pretty lay figures as yourself and Adèle. But, above all things, my love, we must keep in mind the important distinction between a fancy-ball and a masquerade. Nothing which I at this moment remember strikes me as so offensively *mauvais ton* as confounding them. In a masquerade-dress,—in the by-gone days when ladies were

permitted so to amuse themselves,—the perfection of a costume consisted in the learned accuracy with which every circumstance of time, station, and personal peculiarity in the character represented, was seized; whether becoming or unbecoming, whether elegant or precisely the reverse, a masquerading dress, to be approved by persons of real taste, must be strictly and severely historical, and nothing else. But at a fancy-ball, thank Heaven! the case is wholly different. The first object is to ascertain what age and what country furnishes the style most accordant to the form and features, and then all the skill of the artist employed must be directed to modify, heighten, or soften, the effect of the costume chosen, with the most studious attention to what becomes the individual, and utter disregard to every thing else. In short, my dear child, what is learning at a masquerade becomes pedantry at a fancy-ball; and you know me well enough to comprehend how I should shrink from such an imputation. These are the broad principles upon which our conduct

in this affair must be based ; and, these established, we run little or no risk of failure. Your style of beauty is so singularly picturesque, my sweet Sabina, that it would be more difficult to fail than to succeed in producing the effect desired. What say you to an Eastern dress, my love ? White and gold,—simply white and gold,—arranged in the picturesque style usually attributed to Circasian slaves when transplanted to Constantinople, would become you well, I think.”

“ Then such shall be my dress, papa,” replied Sabina ; “ your first thoughts are always brilliant. And Adèle,—what shall our pretty Adèle wear ? ”

“ Spanish ; those magnificent eyes of hers are decidedly Spanish. But her dress, like your own, dearest, must not be too correct. The general outline may be in your case Eastern, and in hers Castilian ; but the detail must be French. I will make a slight sketch of both before your hour for shopping to-morrow, and that, with the assistance of Madame Octavia, will remove all anxiety. But there is

one thing, my dear love, that I wish to observe to you. It is rather *mauvais ton*, my Sabina, to run about, purse in hand, to other people's tradesmen. Not, of course, that your paying ready money can be any inconvenience to me; on the contrary, indeed, I think it always saves trouble. But that is not an advantage which can come for a moment into competition with the consideration of what is *bon ton* and what is not; therefore, Sabina, I wish you to procure every thing at the *magasins* where you have been chiefly accustomed to deal, and order your bills to be sent in, as other ladies of fashion do. You understand, my love?"

"Oh yes, papa, I believe so. I am not to carry my purse, and pay ready money—like the little girls going to market for a sousworth of *oseille*—that is what you mean, is it not?"

"Exactly!" replied her father, laughing heartily at her lively illustration. "And now, dearest, I must leave you; for, as you may imagine, my habit of giving my own instructions to my *maître d'hôtel* renders such an

entertainment as I intend to give Madame Bertrand a matter of business as well as pleasure. But go and find Adèle; tell her of these two engagements, and also that, before mid-day to-morrow, I will prepare for her a little sketch of the style of dress which I propose for her to wear at Prince Frederic's *fête*."

Mr. Hargrave then, with a heart buoyant with hope, and a brow devoid of every trace of care, impressed a kiss upon his daughter's cheek, and left her.

CHAPTER XII.

• MR. HARGRAVE was just putting, on the following morning, the finishing touch to his elegant little drawing of Adèle's costume (that of Sabina, as well as one of his own gorgeous Russian uniform, having been completed to his heart's content an hour before), when a timid and rather sinister-sounding knock at the door of the library disturbed the pleasant careerings of his fancy, and obliged him to say, "Come in."

It was slowly, and as if with reluctance, that the door opened, and presented to his view, not only the careful face of Mr. Jenkyns, which was what he expected to see, but also the dark lines of a sharply-featured and stern countenance behind him, which, after a few

seconds of harassing uncertainty, Mr. Hargrave recognised as belonging to his creditor, Jules Marsan.

The slight frown which had begun to settle on his handsome brow at the sight of his kill-joy Jenkyns, was in an instant changed into a smile of the very kindest suavity, as he rose and stepped forward to meet this man.

M. Jules Marsan moved a little on one side, as if to avoid the hand that was extended to salute him; and fixing his dark, deep-set eye full on the countenance of his debtor, said,—

“This person tells me that you deny having received the letter of notice which I addressed to you, demanding payment (according to agreement) of the 150,000 francs which you owe me.”

“He tells you nothing but the truth, my dear sir,” replied Mr. Hargrave, in a tone of polite indifference. “I question not the least in the world your having sent such a letter, and of course I expect you, my dear sir, to believe as readily that I never received it.

The fact is, M. Marsan, that my life is spent so constantly among persons whose rank entitles them to command my presence whenever they wish for it, that I have positively little or no time left me for attention to my own concerns. I cannot, however, doubt that the message which I did myself the honour of addressing to you by my steward has been satisfactory, and that the settling this little pecuniary transaction at one month from the present time will in all ways suit your convenience."

"No, sir, it will not," replied the thin-visaged Frenchman. "If you have not received my letter, which was intended to accommodate you by giving a month's notice (not stipulated for in the agreement which I hold under your own signature), so much the worse for you. That letter was sent a month ago, and I must have the money before this day week, whether you have received that letter or not."

"But, my dear fellow," returned Hargrave,

gaily, "you cannot reasonably expect any gentleman to have 150,000 francs always ready at a moment's warning."

"It is not at a moment's warning," returned Jules Marsan. "I still give you seven days, which I think,—excuse me, sir,—is considerably more than you have any right to expect: but, beyond that, I will not give you an hour. My resolution is taken; and if you are a wise man, M. Hargrave, yours will be taken too before we part. It is no child's play we are upon. My credit, and the credit of my son, depend upon my having the money you stand pledged to pay me by the time I have named. If you fail me, I will at least give public evidence that I had a right to expect from you the sum I have undertaken to pay. You told me again and again, sir, that you could at any time repay this money at five minutes' notice. I have, therefore, now learned that your word is not to be trusted. Do not fall into the error of believing that I pledge mine as lightly, when I tell you that, were you in the presence of the king himself,

I would arrest you at the very hour that the week I have granted shall expire."

Mr. Hargrave got up and walked to the window. His complexion was perfectly ghastly; and conscious of sensations he wished not to betray, he remained there for a few moments to recover himself. Then, turning again towards Marsan, with a countenance still pale, but, considering all things, most astonishingly under his command, he said, in the light accent of easy nonchalance, —

"Come then, M. Marsan, if it must be so, I will set about this troublesome business directly, and in good earnest. But, to be candid with you, the fact is, that I have recently lost some very considerable sums of ready money at play, and I am by no means quite certain of being able to get hold of the sum you require without longer notice."

"Excuse my interrupting you, sir," said Marsan, "but it is better to tell you now than later that no half measures will be acceded to on my part. I have need—very pressing need of the money you owe me, and have it I will,

though you should sell your plate and your jewels at a tenth of their value to supply the sum."

"Leave us alone for a few minutes, Jenkyns," said Mr. Hargrave. "I do not wish that my old and faithful servant should witness such a scene as this."

Hargrave, with all his faults, was affectionately beloved by his dependants, for he was good-humoured, easy, and liberal; and the old steward, as he moved off in obedience to this unexpected command, cast a glance of pity on his master, which proved that, despite the hard-drawn, money-making lines of his wrinkled face, the old man was not altogether unfeeling. But he started when he looked at him, as if he had seen a ghost; for the countenance of Mr. Hargrave was so deadly pale, and so completely changed from its ordinary expression, that the man thought he must be seized with some sudden and desperate malady, and stopping short in his course towards the door, he drew near his master, and said,—

"If you feel that this troublesome business

makes you ill, sir, don't go on with it for any body. Let me lead Monsieur Marsan back to my bureau, and wait till you feel better."

"Nonsense, Jenkyns," returned Mr. Hargrave, endeavouring to smile with his usual air of gay indifference. "Monsieur Marsan's mode of settling accounts is certainly somewhat new to me, and it is likely enough that I may feel a little discomposed by it; but I assure you I am perfectly well: so leave us, my good fellow, and I will ring the bell twice when I want you."

Jenkyns left the room, and closed the door behind him. Mr. Hargrave remained silent for a minute, and then rising, walked to the door, opened it, and looked out. The glance satisfied him that there were no listeners near, and gently closing it again, he resumed his seat, and said,—

"I have dismissed my steward, Monsieur Marsan, because your urgency drives me to make you a proposition which nothing but the apparent necessity of the case could induce me to think of, and which I shall beg you not

to mention, as it betrays a pressure for money which it would be injurious to me to make known, and which, being only the result of an accidental misfortune, will pass over, and leave no inconvenience whatever behind, if it be not made the subject of idle gossip. Now hear me, Monsieur Marsan, and hear me quietly,—you will not expedite the business by interrupting me. To pay you the sum you apply for in ready money, before the interval of one month, is wholly and absolutely out of my power. But this fact produces, as it should seem, no effect whatever on the peremptory tone of your demand.—Be satisfied, monsieur,” continued Hargrave, moving his hand to check the interruption which seemed to threaten him, “I have no intention whatever of pleading any further for your forbearance. You speak of the sale of my plate and jewels as the means you shall resort to for obtaining what you demand. You are quite right, sir. It is only so, that, at the present moment, it can be satisfied. The time may come, perhaps, and that very shortly, when you may feel inclined to

wish that your measures had been a little less violent. But this matters not. Now hear me, sir. Far from opposing your suggestion of bringing such property to sale as can most easily be converted into money, I will assist you in this object to the very best of my power. The magnificent jewels of my late wife are in my possession, and are for the most part unset, having been recently pulled to pieces for the purpose of arranging them anew for her daughters, one of whom is about to contract an alliance which, I am happy to say, will supply her with jewels, if what I can give her should prove deficient. Such a portion of these trinkets as shall fully answer your demand shall be placed in your hands by twelve o'clock at noon on this day week. Will this content you?"

"Why should they not be placed in my hands directly?" said the Frenchman. "It will take time to convert them into money, and I have told you that money is necessary to me."

"If my proposal does not content you, sir,"

said Mr. Hargrave, with dignity, "I must leave you to take your own methods for recovering the debt. I can do no more."

"Can I not have the jewels now?" demanded the anxious Jules Marsan.

"No, sir, you cannot," replied Mr. Hargrave, in a tone of firm, but civil decision. "It will be necessary for me to shew these articles to a jeweller, before I part with them; both for the purpose of taking an opinion as to their value, and also having others made in imitation of them. I must repeat, sir, that if my placing them in your hands by noon on this day week does not content you, I must leave the business in your own hands."

"Are the stones diamonds?" demanded Marsan.

Mr. Hargrave did not immediately reply. He drew forth his pocket handkerchief, and taking up a rich Bohemian *flacon*, deliberately poured from it a quantity of *eau de Cologne* to refresh himself, as it seemed, under the fatigue of these lengthened details; and then said, with a good deal of *hauteur*, "When you receive

them from me, sir, you will be at liberty to examine them; and should you afterwards bring me any document, signed by a competent and respectable authority, stating that their value falls short of the sum required, I will supply the deficiency. This, I presume, is all that it can be necessary for me to say respecting your part of the business. On mine, I have one favour to request, which I feel not the slightest doubt will be strictly complied with on your part, as I truly believe you, sir, to be a man of honour. I need not point out to you the very obvious fact, that the means to which my imprudence and ill luck have driven me to resort, for the purpose of immediately satisfying your just claim, are in the highest degree painful to me. May I request you, Monsieur Marsan, to pledge me your word that you will not communicate to any one the fact of your having received the jewels from me? I am firmly resolved never to gamble more; and my property is of an extent which will speedily enable me to make such arrangements as will remove my present

deficiency of ready money. May I trust to your honour and kindness for this important concealment?"

"You may, sir," replied Marsan, with more civility of manner than he had hitherto thought proper to display. "I should be sorry to do you or any gentleman an injury. If your deposit fairly covers my just demand, interest and principal, you shall hear no more either of the debt or the manner of its payment."

"I thank you, M. Marsan," replied Hargrave; "I will take care not to err in my estimate of what I am about to make over to you in any way that shall exonerate you from this promise." He then rose and rung the bell twice; the steward reappeared, and the softened creditor rose to take his leave. Jenkyns looked earnestly in his master's face, but said not a word. Hargrave smiled kindly upon him, and nodding his head good humouredly, said in his ear as he passed out, "It is all settled very pleasantly, Jenkyns. He has behaved better than I expected. Say no more

about the business to him, but offer him refreshment, and speak civilly."

The greatly comforted old man silently nodded in return, followed the retreating steps of Monsieur Jules Marsan, and closed the door, leaving his master once more alone to the luxuries of his library and his meditations. But it seemed as if the interruption had jarred his nerves and put them out of tune; for he pushed from him the sketches upon which he had previously been so delightfully employed with a frown, and placing his arms upon the table rested his head upon them for many minutes without moving an inch.

Some princely vision, however, then returned to him; once more he raised himself with all his wonted elasticity of mind and movement, and having completed, entirely to his satisfaction, the drawing of Adèle's dress, he took it, together with that of Sabina, to the boudoir of the two girls, and with his usual gay and gallant manner laid it before them. But although he appeared thus completely to have recovered himself, Sabina, happy and

occupied as she was, remarked that he looked ill.

“Dearest papa!” she said, “you are too good—too kind to us! You positively must not fatigue yourself as you do about all our whims. What lazy girls we are, Adèle, to throw all this upon papa! Are not these sketches beautiful? But I must not have you look so pale, papa—I cannot bear it.”

“My dear Sabina,” he replied, while a shade of temper, most unusual to him, passed across his brow—“my dear Sabina, I do beseech you to leave off telling me that I am pale. Thank Heaven! I never had a very red complexion, my love; and I do assure you that I so detest the idea of it, that did I perceive any symptoms of the kind, I should instantly put myself under very severe discipline to correct it; and if I must let you into my confidence upon the subject, it is what I actually have often done, and still do, whenever I have the slightest suspicion that it is necessary. So never tease me by talking any more about my being pale. Do not look as if

I was scolding you, dearest: but remember this, will you?"

Sabina kissed him, promised to plague him no more about his complexion, whispered to Adèle not to look so dismal, and then sat herself down between them, and chattered away so gaily about balls and costumes that it was impossible to resist the contagion; and both her companions appeared to chat gaily too.

"But all this is concerning the Prince's *fête*," said Mr. Hargrave; "you have not said a word, Sabina, about mine. So now, if you please, let us talk a little of that. By the by, I want you both to tell me something more about this little Madame Bertrand, that we are all making such a fuss about. What is she like? Is she pretty?"

"Yes; extremely pretty, indeed! At least, I suppose so: for M. Bertrand, who is immensely rich, only married her for her beauty."

"And what are all these jewels, that they talk about? It is hardly likely — is it? — that a little nobody, married entirely for her beauty,

should have jewels worth making such a fuss about. Have you heard any body mention them besides your aunt Hautrivage?" asked Mr. Hargrave.

"Good gracious, papa! One hears of nothing else," replied Sabina. "For my part, I think I must beg you to permit my wearing blinkers—I expect to be half-blinded by their splendour. I am afraid to say how many hundred thousand francs they are worth; but it is something perfectly astonishing."

"And pray is the lady supposed to be in love with her magnificent husband?" said her father.

"Poor thing! I am afraid not," was the reply. "They say he is old and ugly."

"Oh, ho! that's the case, is it? That somewhat accounts for the diamonds. But, by the way, how can one ever know in such a case as this, but that the glittering baubles may be false? All paste, Sabina, depend upon it."

"By your leave, no, papa. Every body but you—who really seem to have shut your ears against the most important news of the day—

every body but you, papa, knows perfectly well that they were furnished by the first jeweller in Vienna; and a great many of the finest diamonds are said to have belonged once to Napoleon. I perfectly long to see them," said Sabina.

To this girlish tirade Mr. Hargrave returned no answer, and seemed indeed to have suddenly turned his thoughts to something else; for after a moment's silence a heavy sigh escaped him.

"What are you thinking of, papa?" said Adèle, looking earnestly at him. "If you were a graver personage, I should say that you were going, like Jacques, to moralise the spectacle into a thousand similes. But do not sigh about it. I must not," she added, "tell you that you are looking pale, lest you should chide me, as you did Sabina: but, upon my word, I doubt your being quite well to-day; and you really ought to take care of yourself, or the fancy-ball, and the diamonds, and Madame Bertrand, and every thing else, will all fall to the ground together, as far as we are concerned."

“ Thank you, dear Adèle,” said Mr. Hargrave, rising ; “ but I do assure you, I never was better in my life. I sat up reading Balzac’s new novel last night till I made my head ache ; but it has very nearly left me, and will do so entirely, I doubt not, after I have had an hour’s riding in the Bois de Boulogne. But I must not make you waste any more time. Have you ordered the carriage for your shopping ?”

The sisters assured him they had only waited for his promised drawings, and that they should set off with Madame de Hautrivage immediately.

“ *Au revoir*, then !” he replied, gaily kissing his hand to them both ; “ we shall meet at dinner.” And so saying he left them, with every appearance of recovered health and spirits.

CHAPTER XIII.

DURING the remaining days which intervened before that fixed for Mr. Hargrave's entertainment, no further symptoms, either of languor or ill health, were perceptible in that gentleman. Never before, indeed, completely as ball-giving was his vocation, had he manifested an equal degree of taste, ability, and lively interest in all that was going on. Nothing seemed to escape his attention that could in any degree affect the general gorgeous appearance of his magnificent apartments; and his chief object evidently was to produce such novelty of arrangement in the management of them as might strike even those who were the most familiar with the *locale*, as presenting rooms which they had never seen before. In this his success was so perfect, that when on

the evening before the *fête*, all the alterations of this kind being completed, and the rooms lighted up, he had summoned the three ladies of his family to accompany him in his review of the whole, their genuine and unaffected astonishment equalled their admiration.

The receiving apartments up-stairs were not greatly changed, being for the most part appropriated to the use of card-players ; but in the *rez-de-chaussée*, the whole of which consisted of what might be called state apartments, his love of novelty and surprise had displayed itself to great advantage. In the supper-rooms, indeed, and in the two noble apartments appropriated to dancing, no alteration had been attempted beyond some trifling improvements in the decorations of the orchestras ; but among the lesser rooms, and in part of the garden enclosed at his last ball, the genius of Mr. Hargrave appeared to have performed the work of an enchanter.

He conducted the wandering trio through meandering passages, which led—upholsterers only knew how—to tents of Eastern splendour in one direction, and to twilight retreats of

flowery sweetness in another ; all managed with such mastery of deception, that of three apartments constructed in the gardens and approached from the principal *salle de bal*, through the aperture of a banished window, not one could be reached but by a complication of arcades, dazzling with a thousand many-coloured lamps, yet so mysteriously dubious from the labyrinth-like caprice of their direction, that those who should seek the brilliant Eastern tent would be likely enough to find themselves in the shadowy bower of exotics ; and eyes, longing for the soothing repose of this dimly lighted retreat, might be dazzled anew by emerging upon a lofty chamber, where gas was made to do its best and its worst, to blind and to enchant, by illuminating the gaudy decorations of a Chinese saloon, superb enough to have constituted the glory of glories of the Celestial Empire.

“I am lost, absolutely and literally lost!” exclaimed Sabina, after attempting in vain to recover the route which led to the pretty *bo-cage*, whose gloom contrasted so beautifully with the blaze of light which filled the other

rooms. "I do not mean that I am lost in wonder—though there would be truth enough in that too—but I have positively lost my way, and know no more in what part of the mansion I now am, than if I had never entered its doors till this evening. I expect every moment to come to some vista that shall give me a near view of the Invalides, and feel perfectly persuaded that at your next *fête* you will inclose the Champ de Mars by way of obtaining another little ball-room. Prince Frederic is quite right, papa: there is nobody in all Paris to be compared to you."

"Did the Prince say that, Sabina?" said Mr. Hargrave, his colour rising and his eye kindling with delight.

"Yes, indeed, he did, papa. He said so the day he dined here *à propos* of the perfect reception you gave him. And, I confess, I did not think he was very wrong then; but now I am quite sure he was right."

"I can only hope, my dear child, that upon this less exclusive occasion I shall not lose ground with him. I will not deny that I value his approbation very highly, and it would vex

me a good deal if his Royal Highness condemned the sort of whimsical vagaries I have been playing here. By the way, Sabina, I think the best scheme to avoid my suffering from such a disappointment will be for you to take the office of guide and *cicerone* upon yourself. I have now explained to you the sort of effect I have wished to produce by this varied style of decoration, and if you point it out to him exactly in the same manner that I have done to you, it will prevent the danger of his fancying that the whole thing has been arranged by the upholsterers without my having conceived any general design. Will you promise me, my love, to do this?"

"I will endeavour to do so, papa, if it is your wish," replied Sabina, with some slight degree of confusion in her manner; "but I think you would do it much better yourself."

"But that, my dear, would be so exactly like asking him to praise me for my taste and ingenuity that it must not be thought of. Of course, I do not mean to give you the trouble of leading his Royal Highness every where; but if you can, without making any

obvious fuss about it, take care that he sees the Turkish tent and the Chinese saloon, I shall be pleased."

"For my part," said Madame de Hautrivage, "I most decidedly give the preference to that delicious *bocage*! In what part of the suite it is, I profess I have not the slightest idea; but, to my taste, it is worth all the rest."

"I think it is pretty by way of a contrast," replied Mr. Hargrave; "but, to let you into a secret, madame, I am afraid it is terribly damp. I would have neither of you go there after dancing upon any account. You must all promise me this, or I shall be quite uneasy about it."

"*Mais, mon Dieu, oui!*" exclaimed Madame de Hautrivage. "If it is damp I will not approach it for the universe. *Oh Ciel! imaginez! moi, moi, avec une fluxion de poitrine! Quelle horreur!*"

"And you, my dear children, will you both promise to be as discreet as madame? Will you take care to avoid the *bocage* after dancing?"

Both the girls promised obedience, and the party returned to the library, which was almost the only room that had not undergone a metamorphosis.

Poor Adèle, during all this high-pressure preparation for gaiety, struggled hard to prevent any trace of what she felt from appearing on her countenance; but she suffered greatly. The conviction that she had treated Alfred Coventry ill, that her conduct had been regulated by a jealousy at which common sense revolted, and a want of honourable confidence in an honourable man, which rendered her unworthy of his esteem, gnawed at her very heart, and produced a degree of unhappiness which no misfortune, unaccompanied by self-condemnation, could have brought upon her.

But more than one cause led her to confine all this to her own aching bosom. She saw Sabina infinitely more animated and more disposed to kindle at the touch of pleasure than she had ever been since the death of their mother, and for the world she would not have tarnished the brightness of the hours she was now enjoying. The very lightness and appa-

rent frivolity of this enjoyment increased her wish that it should not be disturbed, for had there been any mixture of love in the feelings which inspired her, the sinking heart of Adèle assured her that even if Sabina were happy she could not be so very gay.

Another cause for the reserve in which she wrapped herself was the deep consciousness that her feelings were not understood, nor in any degree appreciated, by her sister. In every conversation they had held together on the subject of Mr. Coventry's absence, Sabina had treated the matter as a mere temporary misunderstanding, which, if Coventry were in earnest (of which she had no doubt), would beyond all question be removed at no very distant period; and she reprobated, with more vehemence than she often bestowed on any subject, the idea that her sister had been to blame. "If you, Adèle, have been weak," she said, "in too implicitly giving credence to the point-blank assertion of Madame de Hautrivage, Mr. Coventry has at least been equally so in taking an averted look as a signal for leaving for ever a woman that he loved."

But there was no comfort for Adèle in this. Her judgment of Alfred Coventry, cleared as she now felt it to be of all illusion, was not to be hood-winked by the wish of exonerating herself from blame. The strong attachment for this young man, which had by degrees taken such firm root in her bosom, arose from many traits of character, not quite so uncommon, perhaps, among his countrymen as among her own. Adèle de Cordillac was, nevertheless, a very true-hearted Frenchwoman on many points, and, like all other human beings of high-toned feeling, loved the country that gave her birth, and would have willingly sacrificed much for its prosperity and its glory. But her mother's second marriage had made the language and literature of England as familiar to her as her own, and it may be that she felt a greater excitement of curiosity in developing the character of a country to which she did not belong, though accident had given her a more than ordinary facility of becoming acquainted with it, than she would have felt under any other circumstances. But, be this as it may, it is certain that Adèle de Cordillac

had studied the national characteristics of England, as they are found stamped upon her powerful and varied literature, with a degree of admiration which had well prepared her to value at its worth such a specimen of their living excellence as Alfred Coventry.

Many eligible, and in one or two instances even splendid, proposals of marriage had been made for Adèle; but her complete independence had given her a power of rejection, which she exercised with a degree of thankfulness for the possession of it, of which no heart but her own had been at all aware. But although during the whole of this probation she had walked

“In maiden meditation, fancy free,”

presuming *fancy* to mean the “soft passion of love,” she had ever the *beau idéal* of a possible Englishman in her head, and, more firmly, perhaps, than she was quite conscious of herself, was determined to give her heart to no other.

It is not difficult to imagine how the events of the last few weeks had brought all this

speculative feeling into action, or how profound the self-reproach with which she contemplated the conduct which had destroyed the reasonable hope of what had often appeared to her imagination as something almost too precious to be reasonably hoped for.

But all this sadness was deeply buried in her heart, and she listened to all that was said, and sometimes answered it too, with a degree of outward tranquillity that might have done some honour to a Spartan.

* * * * *

Once more the Rue de Lille was nearly blockaded by the carriages which sought to reach, or to retreat from, the lofty *portecochère* of Mr. Hargrave's princely dwelling;—once more the glittering panoply of the patrol which regulated the reins and the whips of the congregated coachmen, proclaimed to every idle passenger the importance of the business that was going on within it;—and once more the elegant *locataire* gave smiling welcome to all that was most brilliant in the society of Paris.

The atmosphere of splendid and well-lighted

rooms, in which he acted as lord of the ceremonies, was to Mr. Hargrave what the reviving warmth of spring is to the vegetable world. It seemed to breathe new life into him ; every fibre appeared to dilate, every faded hue to be renovated ; and the very essence and principle of existence, which had before appeared to lie dormant, burst forth with fresh vigour into animation and activity.

Sabina looked at him with delight. Never had she seen her father so gracefully gay, or looking so pre-eminently handsome. Even Adèle was roused for a few moments to more than a mere outward interest in the scene, as she watched the dignified courtesy and polished ease with which he received the wealthy M. Bertrand, whom he had never in his life beheld before, and his new-looking little wife, laden with magnificent jewels, which seemed to be brought thither much as a Tyrolese or Bohemian musician brings his gaudy costume, in proof and pledge that he is to be admitted, however much all other circumstances in his appearance might lead the beholders to suppose the contrary. It was long since any *salon* in

Paris had thrown the splendour of its mimic day upon gems reflecting them so brightly, and having, moreover, the additional gloss of being new in the eyes of all men. And strange did it seem, to those who thought about it, that any woman,—young and pretty enough to gain favour amidst the rival beauties of a *guinguette*, where she might have skipped about at ease,—should prefer exhibiting those costly wares for the amusement of a throng of perfect strangers, who looked at her for no reason in the world but that they might laugh at the incongruity between herself and her dress. Her husband, however, was neither so old nor so ugly as the romance-loving Sabina had been pleased to imagine; nor was there any reason whatever to suppose that they might not be as fond a couple as had ever been joined together in wedlock, had it not been that the gentleman looked so exceedingly like a showman coming into company to exhibit a puppet or a dancing-dog, and the lady so nearly approaching in awkward but obedient manœuvrings to the chief pet and treasure of such an exhibitor, as to suggest the idea that she was his property.

Yet, after all, this furnished no good grounds for doubting their mutual affection : fondness shews itself in a variety of ways ; and there is no substantial reason for denying that exhibiting, and being exhibited, may be among them.

Prince Frederic was by no means one of the latest guests whose name was thundered through the hall and ante-rooms ; and his arrival, with the peculiarly condescending and even friendly manner in which he addressed Mr. Hargrave and his family, seemed to bring the vivacity of the graceful host to its climax. Carefully, however, did he guard against bestowing too much of himself upon this illustrious personage ; having, together with Madame de Hautrivage, marshalled him to the place of honour in the principal ball-room, in that accredited style of attendance which announces the dignity of a guest to the ignorant as effectually as a herald proclaiming his titles could do, he bowed himself to a distance, leaving the royal young man to amuse himself in any manner that he might find best suited to his inclination. This distance, how-

ever, was not so great as to prevent Mr. Hargrave from taking note as to what manner of amusement this might be; nor did he give more than seeming attention to any thing else, till he saw Prince Frederic lead Sabina into the circle which was forming itself round the room for a waltz.

No sooner had his satisfied eyes given notice to his happy heart that all was right in that quarter, than he turned all his attention to Madame Bertrand. He soon discovered that her husband was a whist-player; and having introduced him to three others, who would all have rather taken root in their chairs than have left them while another rubber might be had, and assured him in the most amiable manner that he should in person have the great pleasure of doing the honours to his lady, he devoted himself in the most conscientious manner to redeem his word, appearing unconscious, excepting at short intervals, that any other lady was in the rooms; and leading her with devoted resolution to join the dancers in the smaller ball-room, though he was a most accomplished performer

himself, and felt all reasonable assurance that the glittering *danseuse* he had chosen would infallibly perform the evolutions of the waltz, which unfortunately was the dance she preferred, with all the fascinating dexterity of an ass in a mill.

Many who saw him thus engaged smiled their admiration at him for his exemplary hospitality ; others looked archly, in the belief that he was making this enormous sacrifice for the purpose of collecting traits of *bourgeoise* character, with which to enliven his discourse hereafter. Madame de Hautrivage knit her brows, and thought he was overdoing the thing altogether ; and Adèle watched him with most unfeigned astonishment as he continued again and again to lead her to the dance,—sometimes in the great room, sometimes in the smaller one, but always with such a display of devoted *empressement* as her own excellent tact told her was not only unnecessary, but very nearly ridiculous. Adèle was, in truth, precisely what the French mean when they talk of being *mystified*. She was puzzled, thrown out, and perfectly at a loss,

as to what motive to assign for so remarkable a proceeding. In any other man it would certainly have been much less so. However much Mr. Hargrave might deceive either himself, or the world in general, upon other points, there was no delusion as to the fact of his Chesterfieldian studies having been attended with the most perfect success; and of this his fair step-daughter was so fully aware, that while she watched his superabundant devotion to his plebeian guest, she felt certain that it could proceed from no blundering as to what was required of him, but must arise from some motive — either grave or gay — which she was unable to penetrate.

Had she been in a merrier mood, it is probable that she would have endeavoured to improve her understanding on the subject, by making her way to her good-humoured step-father and asking him, *sans façon*, why he paid such very particular attention to little Madame Bertrand; but, having given the subject more attention than she believed it possible she could have given to any thing, it faded from

her memory like every thing else not connected in some way or other with her ceaseless self-reproaches on the subject of Coventry.

Delicacy, and proper feeling of all kind, however, prevented her permitting any eye that watched her to perceive that she was no longer the happy being that she used to be. She danced—danced incessantly, for this was less irksome than conversation; and the long hours of the night—long at least to her, though passing with winged rapidity to some others of the party, wore away; till at length, to her great comfort, a movement was visible towards the supper-rooms; and she had made up her mind to steal away as soon as this part of the night's business should be over.

It was during the compression of the crowd towards the door-ways, which this movement produced, that she was first aware of the presence of the young Russian, Count Romanhoff, in the rooms. That he had been invited with the rest of their acquaintance was a matter of course; and, despite her pre-occupation, his absence had not escaped her, for

he was known to be the intimate friend of Coventry; and more than once she had looked about her in the hope of seeing him there, but hitherto in vain.

She now saw him almost close beside her, and, as her eye caught his, it was evident that he was endeavouring to make his way to her. An operation of this sort is greatly expedited by both the parties concerned in it being of the same mind. Adèle greatly wished to speak to M. Romanhoff, and the consequence was, that her arm, either wilfully or of necessity, was withdrawn from that of the gentleman with whom she had been dancing, and who was doing his very best to lead her unscathed through the crowd; while she sufficiently seceded from the throng to enable the Count very soon to succeed in his efforts to reach her.

“I am happy to see you, Count Romanhoff,” said Adèle, civilly: “I have been looking about for you among the waltzers, and fancied you were not here.”

“I have not been here, mademoiselle, more than five minutes. I have been passing

the evening in a scene far less brilliant: I have been assisting my poor friend Coventry to prepare for his departure from Europe. He will leave Paris—for ever probably—in an hour or two. I heard him order his post-horses for five o'clock."

What would not Adèle have given to have been at that moment alone! What words were those for the heart-stricken girl to hear while a hundred eyes were looking at her! But the urgency of the case supported her more effectually than any uncertain hope of escape would have done; and, feeling it impossible to run away, she determined, like many others rendered desperately brave by necessity, to make the best of it, and gain a little more of the same sort of torturing information before she made any attempt to escape. For a moment or two she was silent, for she feared to trust her voice; but at length she ventured to say, "How very disagreeable the crowd is!"

"May I offer you my arm, mademoiselle? Perhaps you will find it more agreeable to retreat till the pressure is a little over?" said

Count Romanhoff, whose ear had caught the tremulous uncertainty of the voice in which the once lively Adèle had addressed him, and who had his own reasons for wishing to converse further with her.

Adèle immediately took his arm. "I shall thank you very much," she said, "if you can manage a retreat for me;" and then recollecting that by far the best means of securing the vicinity of the only person present likely to speak to her of Coventry, would be by placing him next herself at the supper-table, and thereby securing his attendance, she added, "If you can manage to get to that side-door, which none but inmates know to be the shortest way to the supper-rooms, we shall escape the crush entirely."

The Count, with very excellent sympathy of purpose, seconded her wishes by a little sidelong manœuvring, which brought them speedily to the door indicated by Mademoiselle de Cordillac; having passed through which, they found themselves able to proceed without difficulty, the passage having been discovered only by a few of those straggling young men

who have a faculty, like mice, of finding their way in all directions where there is a chance of getting any thing to nibble, and who may be seen at most crowded parties contesting with the domestics the shortest passages, and most direct access to that goal of all their wishes, the region of *pâté-gras* and champagne. By such as these Adèle and her conductor passed along, without pausing to reconnoitre who they might be ; but on reaching one of the turnings by which Mr. Hargrave had so skilfully contrived both to connect and dissever the various apartments of the *rez-de-chaussée*, they perceived that gentleman at a point which draperies and temporary *cloisonnage* had converted into a sort of *carrefour*, in earnest conversation with a man who was neither in the dress of a guest nor a domestic, but who had all the air and appearance of that most disagreeable variety of civilised human nature usually classed as shabby-genteel. The position in which Mr. Hargrave and this man stood prevented either of them perceiving the approach of Count Romanhoff and Adèle, till they were

near enough distinctly to hear Mr. Hargrave say, "I adore her, Ruperto! Manage this matter for me skilfully, and the price named by you yesterday shall be doubled."

Mr. Hargrave spoke in French, but the man whispered a reply in Italian, of which Adèle only heard enough to convince her that her step-father's proposal was agreed to, whatever it was; for her companion, very disagreeably aware that he had led the young lady into hearing what was certainly not intended for her, hastily turned in another direction, which at length brought them, though not without a few more turnings and twistings, to the room they sought: but neither of them spoke a word, for both felt embarrassed by the adventure.

The Count probably thought that there was nothing very extraordinary in the business, and would hardly have heeded the words at all, had they not been spoken in the hearing of Mademoiselle de Cordillac; but on Adèle their effect was very different. She was shocked and astonished much beyond the power of speaking, even if her companion had

been one to whom she could have expressed what she felt; and when at last she found herself seated at one of the supper-tables with Count Romanhoff by her side, not even her earnest desire to hear him speak of his friend could enable her to address a single word to him.

The Count, however, was himself determined to speak what he came prepared to say, and was in the very act of pronouncing the name which, far more than he had any idea of, was sure to rivet her attention, when he was himself induced to postpone the subject for a few moments by the entrance of Mr. Hargrave leading the Duchesse de Vermont. The smiling composure of his manner as he led the noble lady to a place at the most distinguished table, almost made him doubt whether he had not mistaken the person whose privacy he had just before so unintentionally invaded; but turning towards Adèle, who was so greatly less likely to be mistaken than himself, he saw plainly in the astonished countenance with which she regarded him, that if he had blundered she had blundered too.

This was no moment to do his errand, for he fancied it was evident that she was too completely occupied to notice what he wished to say with the attention he desired to obtain. He therefore contented himself with endeavouring to withdraw her eyes from Mr. Hargrave by speaking of her sister, who was seated near the Duchesse de Vermont; while Prince Frederic hung over Sabina's chair in an attitude of very evident devotion.

The eyes of Adèle fixed themselves upon this group, and she sighed, but answered nothing to Count Romanhoff's observation on her sister's "*grand succès dans le monde*;" and before he could say any thing sufficiently interesting to obtain a reply, the attention of both was again irresistibly drawn to Mr. Hargrave, who having left the room as soon as the Duchesse was seated, now returned to it with Madame Bertrand on his arm, and leading her to a smaller table at the other end of the room, seated himself beside her, and assumed an air of so much gay gallantry in conversing with her, that Adèle was more than ever bewildered.

Count Romanhoff amused himself for a moment or two by suffering his eyes to take the same direction, after which he turned somewhat abruptly towards Adèle, and said, "Mademoiselle de Cordillac must excuse me if I venture to intrude upon her attention for one moment, on a subject to which it will probably never again be called. You must permit me, mademoiselle, to speak to you a few words concerning my unfortunate friend, Alfred Coventry."

He had no longer any reason to complain of Adèle being preoccupied. Mr. Hargrave and his mysterious companion in the lobby, Madame Bertrand, Sabina, Prince Frederic, were all equally and entirely forgotten; and her eyes fixed themselves on his face with so earnest and undisguised a look of interest, that, notwithstanding some pretty strong preconceived notions to the contrary, Count Romanhoff perceived that the name he had uttered was not one to which the lady he addressed could listen with indifference. Adèle spoke not, however, but she bowed her head in token that she was willing to hear him.

“ I can hardly hope, mademoiselle,” he said, “ to escape the imputation of being a very impertinent person when you shall have heard what I am going to say ; but I would rather risk this, than leave it unsaid : for it is just possible I may serve my friend by it, and the chance is well worth a little danger. } I only entreat you to believe that the fault, however great, is all my own, and that Alfred Coventry is entirely ignorant of my intention.”

This preface was not very likely to restore the composure of the young lady, but she shewed no outward symptom of the tumult within ; and Count Romanhoff proceeded,—

“ I do not believe it possible, mademoiselle, that my friend Alfred Coventry can have loved you passionately for three months without your being aware of it. Indeed, in opening his heart to me while I was watching over him, during hours in which reason and madness seemed battling in his brain, as to which should be his master, he clearly stated his conviction that you were *fully* aware of this ; and then, with unsparing self-accusation for the weakness, he avowed also that he believed his

love returned——You start, Mademoiselle de Cordillac! Is it his presumption or my frankness which offends you?"

"Neither! neither!" replied Adèle, almost gasping.

"I should be sorry to distress you, Mademoiselle de Cordillac," said the Count, with increased gentleness of tone, "but my self-imposed duty obliges me to be perfectly sincere. I think it is possible, and so I have told him, that his not having complied with the established usages of the country, by requesting from your friends permission to present himself as a pretender to your hand, may have led you to doubt his purpose of devoting to you his life. If this be so, all may yet be well; for you must be sufficiently acquainted with English peculiarities in this particular, to be aware that Coventry would have been obliged to sacrifice what an English lover considers as his dearest privilege, had he addressed himself to your step-father, or your aunt, instead of to yourself. May I ask you, Mademoiselle de Cordillac, whether any species of offence has appeared to you to have been committed by this omission?"

“None, sir,” replied Adèle with decision.

“I am sorry for it,” said Count Romanhoff; and for a moment he was silent, but then continued, “There is another point, mademoiselle, on which I would say a few words, and then I will take my leave. All the world acknowledges the grace and beauty of Mademoiselle de Cordillac,—all the world is aware of her honourable descent and high connexions,—and all the world, too, are perfectly well informed as to the fact of her possessing what is held here to be a large independent fortune; all which circumstances might render the addresses of a stranger suspicious from the probability of their being interested, especially when, as in this case, they have not been made in the usual manner. If any such idea, mademoiselle, was the cause of the sudden change of your manner towards my friend,—a change which he assures me left him without the possibility of doubting that it was your purpose to check any further advances towards an explanation on his part,—if any such opinion found admission to your mind respecting Alfred Coventry, permit me to tell you that you have greatly wronged a noble gentleman, who loved you with true and

pure sincerity, and whose fortune and position in society are such as would render his alliance an honour to any lady of private station in Europe."

The manner of Count Romanhoff had varied through the whole of this *sotto voce* conversation,—carried on under cover of all the busy duties of an attentive cavalier at the supper table,—from gentle to severe, according to the feelings and suppositions which became predominant in his mind during the course of it; but the last words were uttered in a tone of *hauteur* and indignation, which seemed to imply that it must be a very meek and humble-minded response indeed which would satisfy him. Now, Mademoiselle de Cordillac was at that moment in no humour to be humble and meek to any body. All she wished and wanted on earth was before her—all she had ever asked from Heaven during the misery of the last dreadful fortnight was accorded. She was at liberty to open her whole heart to the only man she had ever dreamed it was possible to love; and that by an act of generosity, and not of degradation. For an instant her bright

eye met that of Romanhoff; but there was a flashing joy in it that looked to him like triumph, which puzzled and alarmed him. "Have I undertaken this unauthorised mission," thought he, "solely to gratify the vanity of this unfeeling girl?" And again he turned to speak to her; but ere he could do so she had risen from the table, saying gaily, "I see, Count Romanhoff, that, notwithstanding the extent of papa's preparations, there are many guests still waiting for places at the supper-table: I therefore hasten to give up mine."

Before the young Russian could recover his surprise at the lightness of tone with which this was spoken, Adèle had quitted his side; and the moment after, he saw her pass with a rapid step towards a door by which she disappeared.

"She avoids me," thought he, with a deep feeling of indignation. "Alfred must never hear of this my most unauthorised and most unwise interference. Yet I will describe the light-hearted young lady to him as she deserves. If he has the spirit of a man, I shall be able to cure him of his love!" And

with this friendly intention Count Romanhoff hastened to leave the rooms; and finding his carriage punctually waiting for him, he sprang into it and drove back to his unhappy friend, determined rather to rouse him from sleep than permit him to leave Paris without the advantage of knowing that Adèle de Cordillac was the most heartless coquet in it.

Adèle herself, meanwhile, was very actively engaged in a manner which she intended should produce a different result. On all occasions of great parade like the present, all the male retainers of Mr. Hargrave were clad in gorgeous liveries; and, whether otherwise useful or not, were made to understand that they were expected to assist the general splendour by shewing themselves. Old Roger Humphries was on ordinary occasions exempted from the fatigue of waiting at table, his especial office being that of personal attendant on the young ladies; but just as Adèle, with beating heart, was listening to the last part of Count Romanhoff's communication, she remarked the tall stiff old man parading among the supper-tables with an aspect of very pre-eminent dignity.

With the quickness of lightning she decided upon what she would do; and the moment after the Count had seen her leave the room, she seized on the arm of Roger, who had passed out before her, and only pausing distinctly to pronounce the words, "Follow me, Roger!" glided off to her boudoir, which the old man reached immediately after her.

"Roger Humphries," she said, struggling hard to speak with sufficient composure to be intelligible, — "Roger Humphries, do you remember offering to take a message for me to Mr. Coventry before he left Paris, if I should wish to send one?"

"That I do, indeed, Miss Adèle," replied the old man; "and proud shall I be if you will send me upon such an errand, after all his faithful servant said of him."

"But, Roger, if this is ever done, it must be done instantly! Mr. Coventry will set off in an hour or two for Africa, and I never shall see him more, unless a note from me be first delivered to him."

"For Africa!" cried Roger, plaintively; "mercy forbid, Miss Adèle! That's just where the gentlemen are sure to be killed, they tell

me. For goodness' sake, miss, don't let him go there!"

"Are you stout-hearted enough, Roger, to set off instantly to prevent it?" demanded Adèle, with trembling impatience. "If not, I must hasten back to the ball-room, and send my message by one I should be sorry to employ. Speak, Roger, will you go for me?"

All serving-men are stout-hearted at half-past three o'clock in the morning when a ball and supper are a-foot; and even sober old Roger felt somewhat of the contagious inspiration.

"I will go, Miss Adèle, quicker than a younger man," he replied; "and surer too, take my word for it. Give me the note, Miss Adèle."

"I must write it first, my dear old friend," said his grateful mistress: "sit down, Roger,—sit down, while I do so." Roger obeyed, and as quickly as it was possible to write, fold, and seal, Adèle gave him the following note:—

"If Mr. Coventry will let me see him for ten minutes before he leaves Paris (for Africa!), I shall be able to convince him that I am all that he believed me to be before our

last miserable meeting, at which time I was led to suppose that he was exactly all which he has since thought me.

“ ADÈLE DE CORDILLAC.

“ *Rue de Lille, half-past three, A.M.*

23 April, 1835.”

“ Now then, dear old friend, lose no time,” said Adèle, earnestly ; “ and remember, every step you take, that Mr. Coventry leaves Paris at five o’clock.”

“ Trust me,—trust me !” replied the old man, taking the letter from her, and carefully securing it in his deep waistcoat pocket, fastening every massive button of his coat over it, from the collar downwards. “ My old legs shall ache for it rather than I will fail to get there in time ; and I can’t make an hour’s walk of it, let me go as I will.”

With these consoling words the venerable serving-man disappeared ; while Adèle, still trembling with emotion, but far happier than she had ever hoped to be again, stole unchallenged to her bed-room, conscious that, should the dancing be renewed and prevent

her sleeping, she had quite enough to occupy her mind agreeably for the remainder of the night.

And here it may be observed that it was impossible Mademoiselle de Cordillac could have chosen a more faithful messenger. His whole heart was in the business, which he understood very nearly as well as his fair mistress herself; and a longing and very thirsty desire for another cup of wine was resisted, that no time might be lost. Old Roger, nevertheless, felt that it was absolutely impossible to walk across either of the bridges in white silk stockings and pumps, so that, of necessity, he was obliged to sacrifice a few minutes, while he changed them for a *chaussure* more suitable to the expedition he was about to undertake. But to the honour of Roger Humphries' fidelity and active walking, it must be noted that this unavoidable delay would not have made him too late, had it not been that Count Romanhoff so well succeeded in transfusing a portion of the indignation which burned in his own bosom into that of his friend, by describing Adèle as by far the most accomplished coquet and the

most heartless woman he had ever known, that the unhappy Coventry, roused from his uneasy slumbers above an hour before it was necessary to start, grew so restless and impatient, that the Count rattled all the horse-boys and postilions up, and succeeded in getting Coventry's carriage packed and ready by exactly ten minutes before five. Not another instant was lost in setting off. Romanhoff, kind-hearted as he was vehement, rolled himself and his full dress into a large cloak, and jumped into the carriage after his friend, ordering his astonished servants to follow him to Calais with all things needful for a week's absence; Coventry having gratefully agreed to defer his departure for another quarter of the globe, on condition of the Count's accompanying him for a few days to London. So that when honest Roger arrived, "fiery red with speed," at the hôtel, he had the terrible mortification of hearing that the gentleman he inquired for had driven off with four horses, *ventre à terre*, exactly six minutes before.

* * * *

Meanwhile the festivities at Mr. Hargrave's

were not yet brought to a close. The majority of the company, indeed, departed immediately after supper ; but Mr. Hargrave had induced the flattered and delighted Madame Bertrand to promise him one more waltz, late as it was ; and as her whist-loving husband had not yet left the card-table, no obstacle occurred to prevent her fulfilling the engagement. The grand orchestra was, accordingly, again called upon, and once more a set of unwearied waltzers spun off round the ample floor, as featly as if it had been the first measure they had trod that night.

Though many of the company had departed, this room was still crowded ; and all the other apartments being forsaken, except by such lingering card-players and loitering supper-repeaters as sought amusement elsewhere, it appeared to have become the sole centre of attraction.

It was still, therefore, not without difficulty that the most skilful cavaliers guided the conflicting steps of each fair *danseuse* through the host of lookers-on without endangering either flounce or limb. All those experienced in

such matters declare that, despite fatigue and the inconvenience of circumjacent pressure, generally increased by the unceremonious movements of persons earnestly bent on departure, or on amusing themselves to the very last, by critical examinations of every portion of the pretty pageant,—despite all this, it is currently asserted that the dance, or dances, after supper, are worth all the rest. Why it should be so, it is, of course, impossible to guess; but certain it is, that the statement could rarely have proved itself more correct than on this occasion, for a general air of animation and enjoyment seemed diffused over nearly every individual present.

In none, however, was this more conspicuously the case than in the youthful bride, Madame Bertrand. Whether it was from admiration of her youth and unsunned prettiness, or from compassion of the shy awkwardness with which she carried her little self and her great diamonds, or from any other cause less obvious and more difficult to trace, Mr. Hargrave had devoted himself throughout nearly the whole evening almost exclusively to

her. At first, poor little thing! she felt nearly as much oppressed by this as by her diamonds; but Mr. Hargrave had not devoted himself to the subtle science, called knowledge of the world, without taking notes as well upon simple ladies as on gentle lords; and so admirably did he practise what he had learned, that even before they had sat down, side by side, at the supper-table, all painful shyness on the part of the lady had vanished, and she permitted him to prepare for her more than one goblet of champagne and iced water, without appearing out of measure shocked at giving so fine a gentleman so much trouble.

How much Mr. Hargrave, while recruiting the spirits of his fair partner at the supper-table, had been tempted to enliven his own, it is impossible to say; but undoubtedly he had, during this after-supper dance, every appearance of being particularly gay, and just when the *crescendo* spirit of the waltzers seemed at its acme, he whirled his partner lightly round, and actually danced with her through the draperied opening which led to the various fanciful erections in the garden.

If any noticed this gay manœuvre, it was only to smile at the appropriate style in which their versatile host thought fit to entertain the pretty *quondam* *boutiquière*, and the dance went on with unabated zeal.

And now servants entered, bearing salvers reeking with enticing fumes from cups of warm nectar, which might have won applause from gods, even when idle, and which could hardly fail of being welcomed by mortals after such fatigue. And while the lips of the ladies sipped these delicious little draughts expressly prepared for them, the gentlemen deemed themselves privileged to

“Leave their fair sides all unguarded,”

in order to seek from iced wine the refreshment which the fragrant, smoking, little vases of Sévres china were evidently not intended to afford them.

All this, of course, occupied some time ; yet still the yawning orchestra was not dismissed ; and presently a cry of “Cotillon !” was raised, timidly at first, but gaining strength by degrees, till the whole room seemed to echo

“Cotillon! cotillon!” The obedient musicians uttered one low growling groan, and then began to play so invigorating an air that, like the inspired minstrel immortalised at Anster Fair, they seemed not to leave the power of rest in any; and this most whimsical finale of elegant festivities began in a style that did not foretell a speedy ending.

Except the exemplary mothers, who were chained by duty to their seats, and who moved not, and might not move, till the next measure ended, there were but few spectators of this concluding dance, nearly all who were not engaged in it having departed. Sabina alone, of all the beauties who had shone as stars throughout the night, was quietly, and somewhat wearily, awaiting her setting, when time and the hour should permit it. Prince Frederic, with whom in the course of the evening she had as often danced and as often talked as was at all advantageous for the tranquillity of either of them, had departed, as was his custom, immediately after supper, and she had not danced since. Gladly, upon his leaving the room, would she have left it too; but she

had seen Adèle quit the supper-room, and having watched in vain for her return, submitted to the necessity of remaining to do the honours till the very latest revellers had quitted the house. Too tired, however, to hope that she could attempt conversing, with any prospect of wide-awake success, with the ladies who still kept possession of the benches, she placed herself in the quietest corner she could find, awaiting the moment when the music should cease, in order to step forward and shew that she was at her post to the last.

Just at the moment when the seemingly endless cotillon was at its highest point of vivacity, Sabina observed her father enter the room by a door leading from the supper-rooms; he was alone, and she was on the point of rising to meet him, when she perceived him very abruptly, as it seemed to her, seize the hand of a partnerless lady, and dart forward with her into the middle of the dance, with an air of frolic and defiance of etiquette both equally foreign to his usual style and manner. Sabina disliked the cotillon, and never danced in it; but she felt now that she

disliked it more than ever, as the rude vortex of its mirth seemed to constrain her father to put off his graceful stateliness in order to join in its turbulent evolutions. As the figure of the dance brought him nearer to her, however, an idea occurred greatly more painful than any suggested by the circumstance of his condescending to join in a dance which she did not admire,—she thought he was intoxicated! and the strangely unsettled expression of his eye, as well as a most unwonted want of sedateness in all his movements, fully justified the idea, unsupported as it was by any thing she had ever seen or heard, and totally at variance, as she felt it to be, with all her preconceived opinions respecting him.

Her previous anxiety for the dance to cease was now multiplied a thousand-fold. The idea that her father, of whose finished elegance of demeanour she was infinitely more proud than she could ever have been at any imputed grace of her own, should so distinguish himself, was mortification almost intolerable; and great, indeed, was the relief when, at length, her weary ear ceased to throb under the

infliction of the instruments, whose noise seemed greater as their charm grew less, and group after group passed out—carriage after carriage rolled off,—and the entry of servants, armed with extinguishers, gave her notice that she might make her exit without reproach.

As the company departed, she had the inexpressible satisfaction of perceiving that her father had almost completely resumed his ordinary manner. He was, indeed, rather more observant in his adieux to each separate guest than she had ever seen him before, or than usage, as she thought, required; “But, perhaps,” thought she, “he is conscious of the effect (so unusual to him!) which wine and over-exercise produced, and may be anxious to prove to all who might have remarked it, that it was of no long duration.” Greatly comforted by this idea, she turned towards the vestibule, to which he had attended the last of the ladies in order to embrace and wish him good night, according to custom; but, instead of finding him alone there, as she expected, she perceived him to be surrounded by four gentlemen, all speaking together, while her

father appeared to be listening to them in the greatest astonishment.

“*C'est impossible! — mais, absolument impossible!*” were the first words she distinctly heard, and they were spoken by a gentleman with whose person she was perfectly unacquainted, but who appeared to be one of the guests, and to be suffering from some violent and painful agitation.

“Compose yourself, my dear sir,” said Mr. Hargrave, in a voice of the most pitying kindness; “it is perfectly impossible but that some mistake must be the cause of this most painful alarm. Let me entreat you to walk in, that the fullest inquiries may be made of the servants as to the time your lady’s carriage was announced.”

“My wife drive off without me!” replied the personage, who was evidently the hero of the affair, let it be of what nature it might,—“my wife drive off without me!” he reiterated, in a voice between rage and grief. “I tell you, that it cannot—cannot be!”

“Explain to me, Monsieur de Beauvet, I

entreat you, what all this means?" said Mr. Hargrave, turning to one of the other gentlemen. "This is Monsieur Bertrand, if I mistake not. What is it that has happened to him?"

"The only account I can give of the matter," replied the person thus addressed, "is, that this gentleman—M. Bertrand, as it appears—M. de Soissons, Milor Hartwell, and myself, have been playing during the whole evening at whist. Every refreshment we could wish for has been handed to us; and, therefore, as we all seemed equally to enjoy the *partie*, we have remained at the table till about five minutes ago, when two footmen entered, apparently to extinguish the lights, and informed us, with many apologies for the interruption, that the rest of the company were gone. It so happened that we were in the act of settling for the *partie* just concluded, and, therefore, hastened to descend without further delay. These two gentlemen and myself"—pointing to M. de Soissons and Lord Hartwell—"find our carriages waiting, but M. Ber-

trand has been assured that his lady is gone; and, therefore, has not, I believe, even inquired for his."

"Depend upon it, then, that all is as it should be," returned Mr. Hargrave, gaily. "I have no doubt whatever that we shall find Madame Bertrand waiting in her carriage in the court. I am only vexed that she should have preferred this to remaining with my daughters."

Ere Mr. Hargrave had well finished these words, M. Bertrand rushed out of the house, and Sabina then came forward to ask for further particulars respecting the alarm from which he appeared to be so severely suffering.

More than one voice was courteously raised to answer her, when the unfortunate bridegroom returned, wringing his hands, and almost sobbing with emotion.

"The carriage is there!—the carriage is there!—*Mais elle n'y est pas!*" he exclaimed, in an agony that was truly pitiable.

"Sabina! when did you last see Madame Bertrand?" demanded Mr. Hargrave, with every appearance of anxiety.

“ At supper, I think, papa. Yes, certainly, I have not seen her since supper.”

“ Gracious Heaven !” cried the unhappy husband, “ that must have been hours ago ! Oh ! doubtless she was carried off from the supper-table, and must now, with all that mine of wealth about her, be far beyond the reach of pursuit. Yet think not,” he added, with a burst of very genuine tears,—“ think not, gentlemen, that I am wretch enough to think of the loss of diamonds at such a moment as this. Alas ! the naming them only shews what I think to be the cause of my loss. She would not have left me, do not think it, gentlemen ; she has been snatched away during the hurry and crowding which probably took place on leaving the supper-room, and, ere this time, may have been both robbed and murdered !” And again the poor man wept bitterly.

“ At any rate, my dear sir,” said Mr. Hargrave, with the most soothing kindness, “ I can prove to you that you are mistaken as to the time ; for I myself danced with your charming lady immediately after supper ; and,

though I will not positively assert it, I cannot help thinking that I saw her dance again afterwards."

"With whom, monsieur? with whom?" sobbed the unhappy Bertrand.

"Nay, my dear sir, I will not pretend to tell you that," replied Mr. Hargrave. "I danced the cotillon myself with Mademoiselle de Charmonte, and was too much occupied by her vivacity to notice very exactly who and who were dancing together. But where is your sister Adèle, my dear Sabina? Perhaps she may have been more observant."

"I believe Adèle was not very well, papa," replied Sabina, "for I think she retired immediately after supper."

"And your aunt, my dear? Madame de Hautrivage will be sure to help us, for she observes every thing."

"She only danced once or twice, papa, and then went up-stairs to play *écarté*, as she told me, with M. de Foar."

"It matters not greatly at what hour my unhappy wife disappeared," said M. Bertrand, who had listened impatiently to these in-

quiries. "The fact which makes me the most wretched of men is clear enough. I have lost her! And I believe her to have been murdered. But heaven and earth shall witness that I loved her; for if money, or labour, or perseverance, to the last gasp of life, can avail to avenge her, she shall be avenged!"

These last words were spoken through closed teeth, and with raised hands rigidly clenched, in a manner which seemed to threaten an immediate commencement of hostilities against the whole human race.

The gentlemen looked at each other as if to consult what could be done with the unhappy man, who at that moment looked so like a maniac, that it certainly seemed doubtful whether some degree of coercion might not be necessary to prevent his doing mischief to himself or others; but before the expression of such thoughts had got farther than their eyes, Sabina, with the courage that genuine pity always inspires, had laid her gentle hand on the sufferer's uplifted arm, and, less by the force of that than by the power of her soothing voice, caused it to drop again, while

a fresh burst of tears gave a safer vent to his feelings, and enabled those around him to suggest the only mode of proceeding which was likely to remedy the misfortune he deplored. He could not, however, be persuaded to return to the forsaken rooms ; and the consultation which followed took place in the hall, at which the pitying Sabina assisted, and suggested an inquiry, the result of which threw so much light upon the mysterious business, as went far towards proving, even to those who were less confiding than the enamoured husband, that the poor lady had been snatched away with a degree of vehement haste, which spoke strongly in favour of her having done nothing to assist the elopement.

“ Has any one inquired for Madame Bertrand’s cloak ? ” demanded Sabina ; upon which search was immediately made in the room appropriated to receiving ladies’ wraps, and there the ermine-lined white satin capuchin of the lost lady was discovered.

“ There can then be no doubt that the unfortunate lady has been removed by violence,” observed Lord Hartwell. “ No suspicion could

have been raised," he continued, "at any period during the evening had she sent a gentleman to ask for this mantle; and this she undoubtedly would have done had power of choice been left her. M. Bertrand must immediately give notice to the police; and it is more than probable—I conceive it to be almost certain—that he will discover where his lady is, and by whom she has been thus spirited away."

Every voice present joined in seconding this proposal; and Mr. Hargrave, in the most hospitable and amiable manner, expressed his hope that M. Bertrand would permit a room to be prepared for him in the house, promising that, if he would endeavour to compose himself to rest, he would himself go in search of the police, and make them fully understand the nature of the business on which they were to be employed, and the enormous importance attached to it. But poor M. Bertrand was far too miserable to consider rest as a blessing. He civilly, but peremptorily, declined Mr. Hargrave's assistance; and, pressing with an air of passionate fondness the forsaken gar-

ment of his lost wife to his bosom, waved an unceremonious farewell to the party, stammered out some order to his servants, and threw himself into his carriage.

“Where did the poor man order them to drive?” said Mr. Hargrave to the three gentlemen, who remained panic-struck, as it seemed, in the hall. “I hope, poor soul! that he will not set out upon a wild-goose chase without consulting a *chef de police* as to what he had better do.”

“There is no danger of that,” replied M. de Soissons. “It is clear to me that he has conceived a correct view of the case. It is perfectly evident, *selon moi*, that the poor little woman has been kidnapped for the sake of her diamonds. God forbid they should murder her! Do you think so horrible a catastrophe probable, *mon cher* Hargrave?”

“*Mais non, mon cher*,” replied Mr. Hargrave, composedly caressing his *favoris*, “I really do not. On the contrary, if you ask my opinion of the affair, *en ami*, I will give it to you frankly:—I firmly believe that the pretty little *grisette* has eloped.”

“*Diable!*” exclaimed M. de Beauvet; “what makes you think so, Mr. Hargrave?”

“Go to bed, dearest!” said Mr. Hargrave, addressing the pale Sabina, who, though trembling violently, continued to stand near her father, as if hoping to hear something which might lessen the terror that shook her frame.

“Murdered!” she exclaimed, as if replying to her father’s command: “how can I go to bed, father, till I know that she is safe?”

“Be assured of it, my dear Sabina,” returned Mr. Hargrave, slightly smiling, and in an accent which seemed to speak more plainly than his words. “It is not possible for me to enter into all my reasons for feeling quite persuaded that this foolish young woman was exceedingly likely to do exactly what she has done. Kidnapping pretty ladies, whether they will or no, is quite an old-fashioned device, I assure you; so go to bed, my love,—there’s a good girl!—and do not alarm your kind little heart more than is necessary.”

Sabina remonstrated no further, but silently embracing her father, and bowing a farewell to the three lingering guests who still re-

mained in the hall with him, retired to her chamber.

Mr. Hargrave continued standing in the midst of the dismayed whist-players, evidently waiting only for their departure to follow her example ; but still they lingered, and as soon as the young lady was out of sight their three voices were raised simultaneously to request he would explain the hints he had dropped, and tell them his reasons for feeling so certain, as he appeared to be, of Madame Bertrand's having eloped with her own free choice.

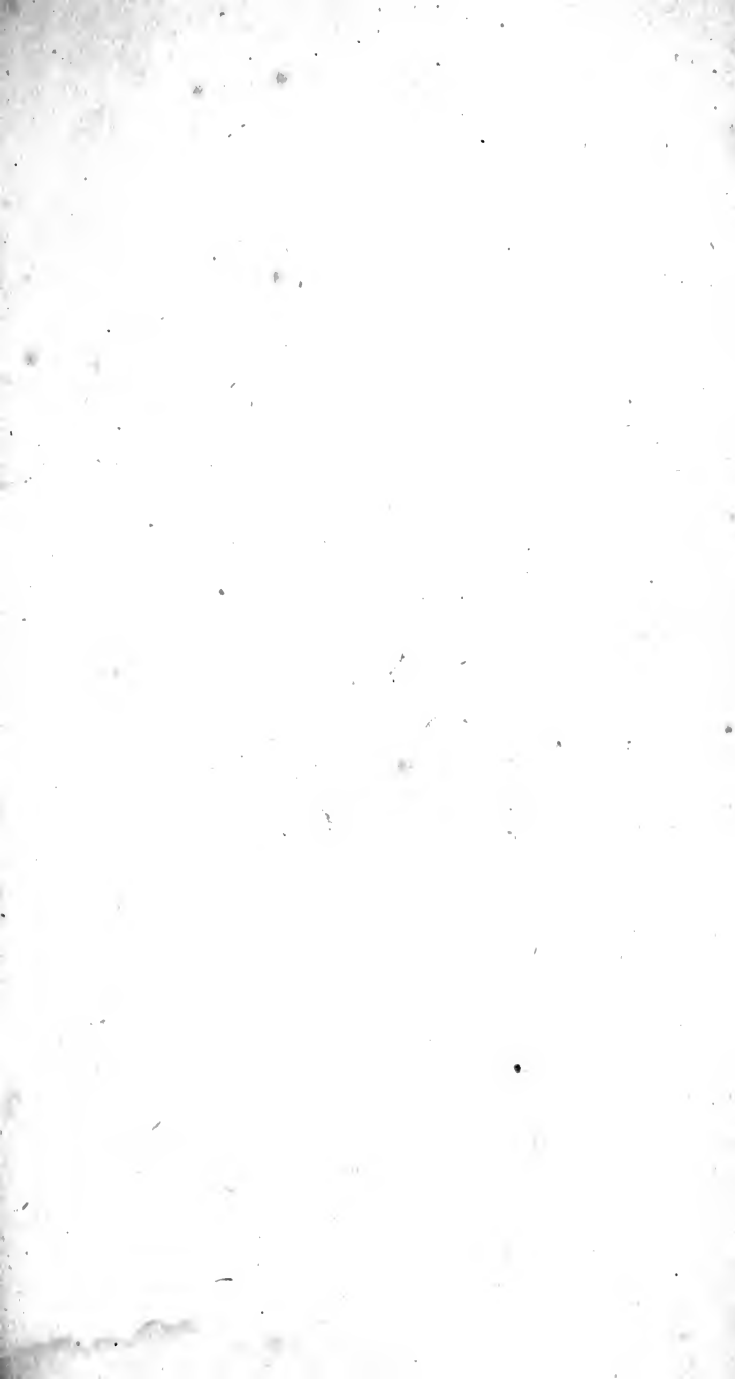
Mr. Hargrave laughed. "It is hardly fair—is it?" he said, "to examine me so very closely. However, if we did not all look, and, as I presume, feel, so very sleepy, I might chance to make you laugh, by repeating some of the sayings and doings of the pretty lady in question, which I have seen and heard to-night. But I cannot say I think there is any thing in the affair worth keeping you out of your beds to discuss. I will, therefore, only say that I believe you may go to sleep in peace, without feeling any alarm concerning the personal safety of pretty Madame Bertrand."

The three gentlemen smiled, nodded, and looked intelligent ; but being all of opinion that they could no longer resist the plainly confessed wishes of their weary host for their departure, hurried away, without entering into any further discussion, and Mr. Hargrave mounted to his own room, by no means sorry to be left alone.

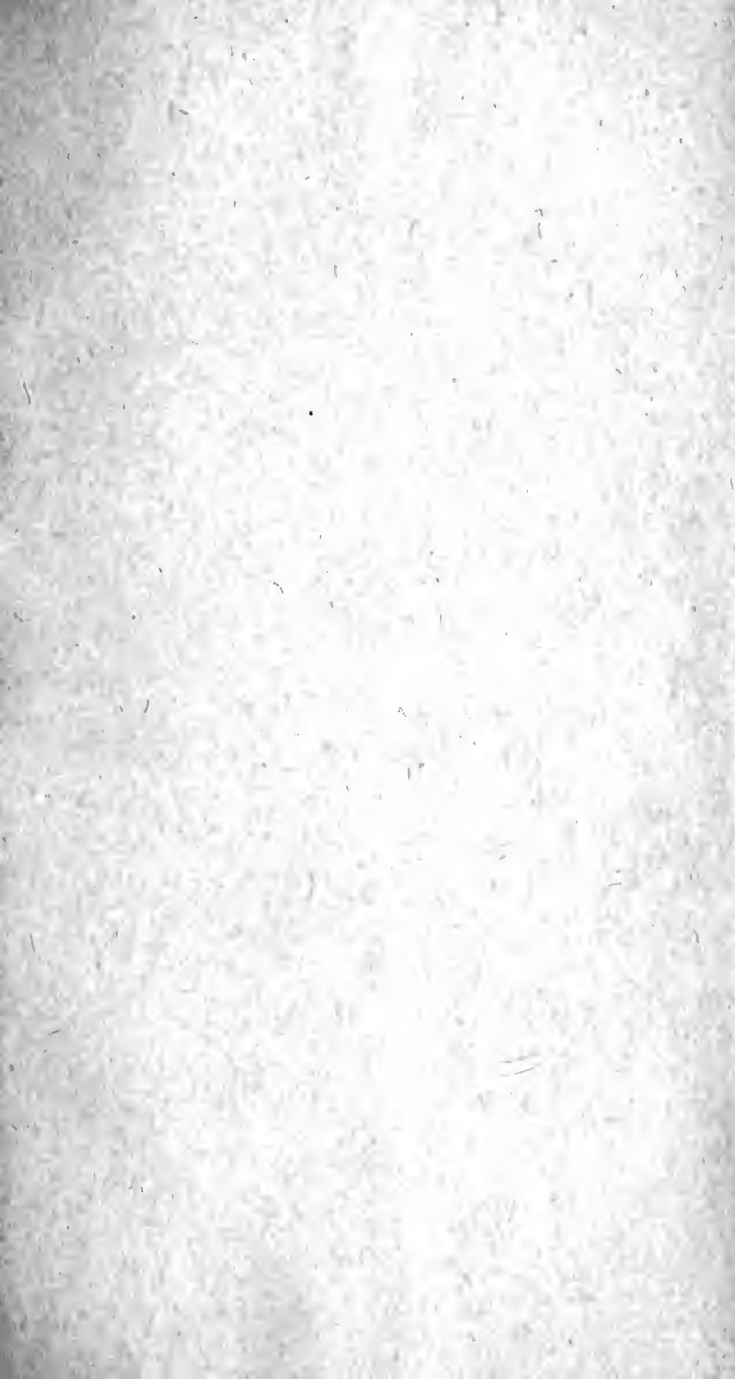
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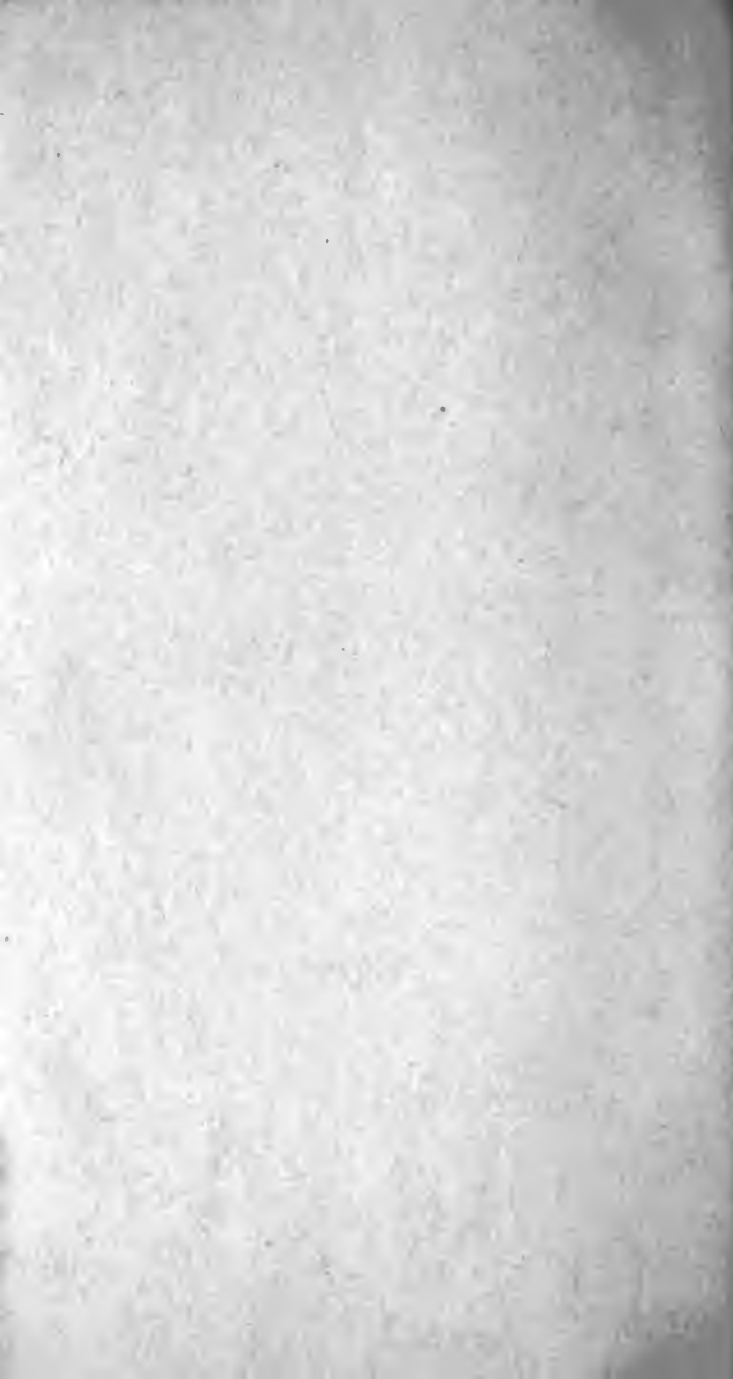
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